Michael Sadleir

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T. Thistlethwayte Esqre

Southwick Park. 1850.

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3 vols.

# COUNTRY QUARTERS.

VOL. I.

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*Marguerite Blessington.*

*Drawn on Stone by R. J. Hamerton, from the original portrait in the possession of Mr. Mitchell.*

London W. Shoberl, 20, Great Marlborough Street.

Meacham & Co. Printers, 1 Adam Street, Strand.

# COUNTRY QUARTERS;

A NOVEL.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON,

WITH A MEMOIR

BY HER NIECE, MISS POWER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
WILLIAM SHOBERL, PUBLISHER,
20, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

1850.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY G. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND

# MEMOIR

OF

# THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

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The task of a biographer is always attended with peculiar difficulties, which increase or diminish in an inverse ratio to the time which may have elapsed since the death of the person whose character is to be illustrated and portrayed. Petty jealousies, rival pretensions, contending interests or opinions, false impressions and prejudiced views, generally blind people more or less to the merits of their immediate contemporaries, and it is only in a few instances, where all the more endearing qualities of the heart accompany great mental superiority, that they are not more disposed to cavil at the praise bestowed, than to inquire dispassionately into its strict justice, or propriety.

Only about six months have elapsed since the grave closed over the mortal remains of Lady Blessington, and it is the consciousness that this name (destined

to be borne by her alone) excited among all classes as much affection as admiration, which gives us the courage thus early to attempt a brief biographical notice of the gifted being who has been so lately and so suddenly snatched from among us.

Marguerite Blessington was the third child and second daughter of Edmund Power, Esq., of Knockbrit, near Clonmel, in the County of Tipperary, and was born on the 1st of September, 1790. Her father, who was then a country gentleman, occupied with field sports and agricultural pursuits, was the only son of Michael Power, Esq., of Curragheen, and descended from an ancient family in the County of Waterford. Her mother also belonged to a very old Roman Catholic family, a fact of which she was not a little proud, and her genealogical tree was preserved with a religious veneration and studied until all its branches were as familiar as the names of her children:—"My ancestors, the Desmonds," were her household Gods, and their deeds and prowess her favourite theme.

The rest of the family consisted of a son, Michael; Anne and Edmund, who both died early; Ellen, who married, first, Mr. Home Purves, brother of Sir Alexander Home Purves, a Scotch baronet of ancient descent and large fortune, and secondly, the Viscount Canterbury, then Speaker of the House of Commons; Robert, now Surveyor-General of Van Diemen's Land; and Marianne, married to the Baron de St. Marsault.

Beauty, the heritage of the family, was, in her early youth, denied to Marguerite; her elder brother

and sister, Michael and Anne, as well as Ellen and Robert, were singularly handsome and healthy children, while she, pale, weakly, and ailing, was for years regarded as little likely ever to grow to womanhood; the precocity of her intellect, the keenness of her perceptions, and her extreme sensitiveness, all of which are so often regarded, more especially among the Irish, a people peculiarly impressionable and superstitious, as the precursive symptoms of an early death, confirmed this belief, and the poor, pale, reflective child was long looked upon as doomed to a premature grave.

The atmosphere in which she lived was but little congenial to such a nature. Her father, a man of violent temper, and little given to study the characters of his children, intimidated and shook the delicate nerves of the sickly child, though there were moments—rare ones, it is true—when the sparkles of her early genius for an instant dazzled and gratified him. Her mother, though she failed not to bestow the tenderest maternal care on the health of the little sufferer, was not capable of appreciating her fine and subtle qualities, and her brothers and sisters, fond as they were of her, were not, in their high health and boisterous gaiety, companions suited to such a child.

During her earliest years, therefore, she lived in a world of dreams and fancies, sufficient, at first, to satisfy her infant mind, but soon all too vague and incomplete to fill the blank within. Perpetual speculations, restless inquiries, to which she could find no satisfactory solutions, continually occupied her

dawning intellect; and, until at last accident happily threw in her way an intelligence capable of comprehending the workings of the infant spirit, it was at once a torment and a blessing to her.

This person, a Miss Anne Dwyer, a visitor and friend of her mother's, was herself possessed of talents and information far above the standard of women in those days and in those situations, where a considerable portion of natural and uncultivated cleverness, an inexhaustible fund of vivacity and repartee, with a very small sprinkling of education and accomplishments, "two washing gowns and a tune on the piano," generally formed the whole dower of an Irish country girl, even when belonging to some of the oldest and most respectable families.

Miss Dwyer was surprised and soon interested by the reflective air and strange questions, which had excited only ridicule among those who had hitherto been around the child. The development of this fine organization, and the aiding it to comprehend what had so long been a sealed book, formed a study fraught with pleasure to her; and, while Marguerite was yet an infant, this worthy woman began to undertake the task of her education. She commenced by encouraging her freely to communicate all her ideas, thoughts, and speculations, and by answering her questions as clearly and satisfactorily as she was able. The child, enchanted at being at length understood and instructed, eagerly demanded where her preceptress had found what appeared to her an inexhaustible fund of knowledge. "From books," was the reply; and, from that moment, books seemed to

her the most precious of all treasures. She learned to read with a rapidity and facility that astonished as much as they delighted her instructress: and, once possessed of this source of entertainment, she became independent of all other amusement.

Even at this early age, the powers of her imagination had already begun to develope themselves. She would entertain her brothers and sisters for hours with tales invented as she proceeded, and at last so remarkable did this talent become, that her parents, astonished at the interest and coherence of her narrations, constantly called upon her to *improviser* for the entertainment of their friends and neighbours, a task always easy to her fertile brain; and, in a short time, the little neglected child became the wonder of the neighbourhood. Her health at length began to improve; and, though still cited as the plainest of the family, there were to be found a few who ventured to predict that she would one day do it no discredit.

The increasing ages of their children, and the difficulty of obtaining the means of instruction for them at Knockbrit, induced Mr. and Mrs. Power to put into practice a design long formed of removing to Clonmel, the county town of Tipperary. This change, which was looked upon by her brothers and sisters as a source of infinite satisfaction, was to Marguerite one of almost unmingled regret. To leave the place of her birth, the scenes which her passionate love of Nature had so deeply endeared to her, was one of the severest trials she had ever experienced, and was looked forward to with sorrow

and dread. At last, the day arrived when she was to leave the home of her childhood, and sad and lonely she stole forth to the garden to bid farewell to each beloved spot.

Gathering a handful of flowers, as relicts to keep in memory of the place, she, fearing the ridicule of the other members of the family, carefully concealed them in her pocket; and, with many tears and bitter regrets, was at last driven from Knockbrit, where, as it seemed to her, she left all of happiness behind her.

Arrived at their destination, the many friends with whom her parents were acquainted at Clonmel, eagerly flocked around them. Loud and long were the praises bestowed on the beauty and animation of the children, with the exception of Marguerite, who, pale, sad, and retiring, showed to even less advantage than usual; and she would have remained wholly unnoticed, had not the projection of that homely article of dress, her pocket, unfortunately attracted the attention of the lady at whose house the first evening was passed. "What have you got in your pocket, my dear?" she inquired of the child, who, blushing with painful confusion, dared not reply to the question. Her mother beckoned to her, and, thrusting her hand into the repository of treasures, drew forth from its recesses the withered flowers, so carefully placed there in the morning. Shame, embarrassment, and grief, all struggled in the breast of the child as the beloved relics were brought to light, and contemptuously flung from the window,—and, after a hard but unsuccess-

ful effort to restrain her tears, she burst into a fit of weeping, which drew down accusations of folly and ill-temper, at the idea that a girl of her age should amuse herself by filling her pocket with withered flowers, and then cry because they were taken from her!

At Clonmel, the improving health of Marguerite and the society of children of her own age, gradually produced their effect on her spirits; and, though her love of reading and study continued rather to increase than abate, she became more able to join in the amusements of her brothers and sisters, who, delighted at the change, gladly welcomed her into their society, and manifested the affection which hitherto they had little opportunity of displaying.

But soon it seemed as if the violent grief she had experienced at quitting the place of her birth, was prophetic of the misfortunes which, one by one, followed the removal to Clonmel.

Her father, with the recklessness too often displayed by his countrymen, commenced a system of give-and-take hospitality, which his means, though amply sufficient to supply necessary expenses, were wholly inadequate to support.

He then embarked in a speculation in which were engaged the heads of some of the most respectable families of Clonmel and its neighbourhood; and so successful was it at first, that he would, in all probability, have been enabled to secure a comfortable independence for himself and his children, when, in an evil hour, he was tempted by the representations of a certain nobleman, more

anxious to promote his own interest and influence than scrupulous as to the consequences which might result to others, to accept the situation of Magistrate for the counties of Tipperary and Waterford, a position from which no pecuniary reward was to be obtained, and which, in those times of trouble and terror, was fraught with difficulty and danger.

Led on by promises of a lucrative situation and hints at the probability of a baronetcy, as well as by his own fearless and reckless disposition, Mr. Power performed the painful and onerous duties of his situation with a zeal which procured for him the animosity of the friends and relatives in the remotest degree of those whom it was his fate in the course of his office to bring to punishment, and entirely precluded his giving the slightest attention to the scheme which had bid so fair to re-establish the fortunes of his family. His nights were spent in hunting down, with troops of Dragoons, the unfortunate and misguided rebels, whose connexions, in turn, burned his store-houses, destroyed his plantations, and killed his cattle, while for all of these losses he was repaid by the most flattering encomiums from his noble friend, letters of thanks from the Secretary for Ireland, acknowledging his services, and by the most gratifying and marked attention at the Castle, when he visited Dublin.

He was too proud to remind the nobleman he believed to be his friend, of his often-repeated promises, whilst the latter, only too glad not to be pressed for their performance, continued to lead on his victim, and, instead of the valuable official appointment, &c. &c.,

proposed to him to set up a newspaper, in which his lordship was to procure for him the publication of the Government Proclamations, a source of no inconsiderable profit. This journal was, of course, to advocate nothing but his Lordship's views, so that, by way of serving his friend, he found a cheap and easy method of furthering his own plans. The result may be guessed;—Mr. Power, utterly unsuited in every respect to the conduct of such an undertaking, only became more and more deeply involved, and year by year added to his difficulties.

About this time, Anne, the eldest of the family, was attacked by a nervous fever, partly the result of the terror and anxiety into which the whole of the family was plunged by the misfortunes which gathered round them, aggravated by the frequent and terrible outbreaks of rage, to which their father, always passionate, now became more than ever subject. In spite of every effort, this lovely child, whose affectionate disposition and endearing qualities entirely precluded any feeling of jealousy which the constant praises of her extreme beauty, to the disparagement of Marguerite, might have excited in the breast of the latter, fell a victim to the disease, and not long after, Edmund, the second son, also died.

These successive misfortunes so impaired the health and depressed the spirits of the mother, that the gloom continued to fall deeper and deeper over the house.

Thus matters continued for some years, though still there were moments when the natural buoyancy

of childhood caused the younger members of the family to find relief from the cloud of sorrow and anxiety that hung over their home. The love of society still entertained by their father, brought not unfrequent guests to his board, and enabled his children to mix with the families around. Among those who visited at his house, were some whose names have been honourably known to their country. Lord Hutchinson and his brothers, Curran, the brilliant and witty Lysaght, Generals Sir Robert Mac Farlane, and Sir Colquhoun Grant, — then Lieutenant-Colonels, and other men of talent and merit, were among these visitors, and their society and conversation were the greatest delight of Marguerite, who, child as she was, was perfectly capable of understanding and appreciating their superiority.

At fourteen, she began to enter into the society of grown-up persons, an event which afforded her no small satisfaction, as that of children, with the exception of her brothers and sisters, especially Ellen, from whom she was almost inseparable, had but little charm for her. Ellen, who was somewhat more than a year her junior, shared the beauty of her family, a fact of which Marguerite, instead of being jealous, was proud, and the greatest affection subsisted between the sisters, though there was but little similarity in their dispositions, or pursuits. In order that they might not be separated, Ellen, notwithstanding her extreme youth, was permitted to accompany her sister into the society of Tipperary, that is to say, to assemblies held once a week, called *Coteries*. These,

though music and dancing were the principal amusements, were not considered as balls, to which only girls of riper years were admitted. Here, though Ellen's beauty at first procured her much more notice and admiration than fell to the lot of her sister, the latter, ere long, began to attract no inconsiderable degree of attention. Her dancing was singularly graceful, and the intelligence of her countenance, and the charm of her conversation, produced more lasting impressions than mere physical beauty could have won. Her consciousness of the want of this attraction also induced her to bestow particular pains on her dress, a taste for which had, we may state *en passant*, very early developed itself, and been the cause of many amusing adventures, which our space, unfortunately, does not permit us to relate.

About this period, the 47th Regiment arrived, and was stationed at Clonmel, and, according to the custom of country towns, particularly in Ireland, all the houses of the leading gentry were thrown open to receive the officers with due attention.

At a dinner given to them by her father, Marguerite was immediately singled out by two of them, Captain Murray and Captain Farmer, who paid her the most marked attention, which was renewed at a juvenile ball given shortly after.

The admiration of Captain Murray, although it failed to win so very youthful a heart, pleased and flattered her, while that of Captain Farmer excited nothing but mingled fear and disgust. She hardly knew why; for young, good-looking, and with much to win the good graces of her sex, he was generally

considered as more than equal to Captain Murray in the power of pleasing.

An instinct, however, which she could neither define nor control, increased her dislike to such a degree at every succeeding interview, that Captain Farmer, perceiving it was in vain to address her personally, applied to her parents, unknown to her, offering his hand, with the most liberal proposals which a good fortune enabled him to make. In ignorance of an event which was destined to work so important a change in her destiny, Marguerite received a similar proposal from Captain Murray, who, at the same time, informed her of the course adopted by his brother officer, and revealed a fact which perhaps accounted for the instinctive dread she felt for him. Captain Farmer was subject to fits of insanity, so violent as to endanger the safety of himself and those around him; and, even during his lucid intervals, there were moments when the symptoms of the terrible malady might be detected in a certain wildness and abruptness of speech and gesture. Astonishment, embarrassment, and incredulity, were the feelings uppermost in the girl's mind at a communication so every way strange and unexpected. That a child of fourteen should thus seriously be sought in marriage by two men, seemed to her as all but impossible, and that she should be kept in ignorance of the fact as regarded one, appeared no less so. The idea, however, that this silence on the part of her parents, might proceed from their having rejected the addresses of her dreaded suitor, occurred to relieve her mind, and, feeling more pained and embarrassed

than gratified by the declaration of Captain Murray, she blushingly declined his proposals, on the plea that she was too young to contemplate so serious an engagement.

A few days proved to her that the information of Captain Farmer's having addressed himself to her parents was but too true; and the further discovery that these addresses were sanctioned by them, filled her with anxiety and dismay. She knew the embarrassed circumstances of her father, the desire he would naturally feel to secure a union so advantageous in a worldly point of view for one of his children, and she knew, too, his fiery temper, his violent resistance of any attempt at opposition, and the little respect, or consideration, he entertained for the wishes of any of his family when contrary to his own. Her mother, too, gave but little heed to what she considered as the foolish and romantic notions of a child who was much too young to be consulted in the matter. Despite of tears, prayers, and entreaties, the unfortunate girl was compelled to yield to the commands of her inexorable parents; and, at fourteen and a half, she was united to a man who inspired her with nothing but feelings of terror and detestation.

The result of such a union may be guessed. Her husband could not but be conscious of the sentiment she entertained towards him, though she endeavoured to conceal the extent of her aversion; and this conviction, acting upon his already diseased brain, produced such frequent and terrible paroxysms of rage and jealousy that his victim trembled in his

presence. It were needless to relate the details of the period of misery, distress, and harrowing fear, through which Marguerite, a child in years, though old in suffering, passed. Denied in her entreaties to be permitted to return to the home of her parents, she at last, in positive terror for her personal safety, fled from the roof of her brutal persecutor to return no more.

Of the years which followed this decisive step, we can give but little account. Mrs. Farmer resided principally in England in the most complete seclusion, indulging to the utmost her natural love of study, to which she devoted the greater portion of her time. Circumstances having at last induced her to fix upon London as a residence, she established herself in a house in Manchester Square, where, with her brother Robert, (Michael had died in India some years previously,) she remained for a considerable period, enjoying in his society and her favourite pursuits a degree of tranquillity which, after the stormy scenes of her early years, was positive happiness.

Notwithstanding the troublous scenes through which she had passed, the beauty denied her in childhood had gradually budded and blossomed into a degree of loveliness which many now living can attest with the warmest enthusiasm, and which Lawrence painted and Byron sang.

Unknown, unfriended, and retiring from the gaze of the world, her extraordinary beauty attracted, wherever she appeared, a degree of attention and admiration which she was far from seeking. By

dint of anxious inquiries, her history became partly revealed, and the interest her misfortunes excited added to the charm that she already possessed. Hosts of would-be admirers sought to win her favour, but her dignity and reserve forbade any but the most respectful attentions, and drove away the idle flatterers whose ill-advised gallantries met with the coldest rebuffs.

She received at her house those only whose age and character rendered them safe friends, and a very few others on whose perfect respect and consideration she could wholly rely.

Among the latter was the Earl of Blessington, then a widower, who entertained feelings of the deepest and most respectful admiration for his beautiful hostess; but, fearful of forfeiting the privilege so highly prized of enjoying the charm of her society and conversation, he ventured not to give expression to any feeling that might endanger the loss of this pleasure, until the occurrence of an event which placed the destiny of Mrs. Farmer in her own hands.

This was the death of her husband, who, at a dinner given by one of his friends, locked the door, and, being seized with one of the fits of insanity to which he had for so many years been subject, attempted to rush out, and, failing in his frenzy to open the lock, he sprang to the window, which stood open, and, before he could be prevented, flung himself out, and was killed almost on the spot. This event, which occurred in the year 1817, left Lord Blessington at liberty to solicit the hand of Mrs. Farmer,

which she accorded to him, and the marriage took place in London, in the month of February, 1818.

And now a new era opened in the life of her whose existence, up to this period, had been one of almost unmingled trial and suffering. Young, beautiful, with a charm of manner rarely equalled, gifted with genius, and every quality that could excite affection as well as admiration, the wealth, splendour, and homage which surrounded her seemed but as her natural atmosphere; and happy, without being dazzled by the brilliant change in her destiny, she turned all her talents to the task of making the home to which her husband had brought her, one in every way suited to his rank, position, and magnificent fortune, and congenial to their mutual tastes. How she succeeded, hundreds still living can attest.

Statesmen, wits, poets, painters, men of genius and science—even royalty itself, proudly acknowledged the influence, and gratefully accepted the notice of the brilliant and beautiful Countess of Blessington; and the mansion in St. James's Square soon became the centre of attraction for the most remarkable men of the day of all denominations. But, in the midst of her triumphs, the goodness of her heart, and the fine qualities that had ever distinguished her, remained wholly unimpaired. Generous to lavishness, charitable, compassionate, delicately considerate of the feelings of others, sincere, forgiving, devoted to those she loved, and, with a warmth of heart rarely equalled, her change of fortune was immediately felt by every member of her family. The parents whose cruel obstinacy had involved her in so much misery,

but whose ruined circumstances now placed them in need of her aid, were comfortably supported by her up to the period of their deaths. Her brothers and sisters, (the youngest of whom, Marianne, she adopted and educated,) and even the more distant of her relatives, all profited by her benefits, assistance, and interest.

"And none who sought her bounty, sought in vain."

Of her sojourn abroad, her "Idler in France" and "Idler in Italy," give a detailed account; and her "Conversations with Lord Byron," whose acquaintance she then first made, are the most interesting memorials of an epoch in her life to which she ever referred with extreme interest and pleasure.

The death of Lord Blessington, from apoplexy, which occurred in Paris, in the year 1825, again effected a change in her destiny, and was a source of the deepest and most enduring affliction. She remained in Paris till after the Revolution of 1830, when she returned to England, and took a house in Seamore Place, May Fair, from which some years subsequently she removed to Gore House, Kensington. Here, in the midst of splendour and elegance, adding largely to her jointure by the success of her literary efforts, she lived for some years a life peculiarly suited to her taste—surrounded by men of distinction, in every branch, loved and admired by all who came within her sphere. Gore House was an arena where assembled the celebrities of all nations, all politics, all denominations, and all positions: it was the starting point from whence Prince Louis Napo-

léon Bonaparte, a cherished guest through years of friendless exile, proceeded to head the government of France.

But, in the course of time, changes and circumstances, over which Lady Blessington had no control, rendered a removal from Gore House desirable. Severe domestic afflictions, increasing years, and impaired health, made the literary labour, in which she had been so long and actively engaged, a task much too difficult and fatiguing to be longer persevered in, at the same time that its remuneration, in the cases of even the most popular and distinguished writers, became considerably diminished. The distresses in Ireland, from whence Lady Blessington's income was drawn, were also the source of considerable delays, disappointments, and losses. Desirous of rest, and feeling the impossibility of making a change in her mode of life without a change of residence, she had long contemplated retiring to the Continent, where her income would be sufficient to enable her to live without the necessity of labour. This step was at last put into execution, and, in the month of April, 1849, she removed to Paris, where she took a new and beautiful *appartement* in the Champs Elysées, which she began to occupy herself in furnishing. Having nearly completed the task, her impatience to quit the hotel, where she suffered much from the heat and noise, and her desire to enter her new abode, induced her to remove to it before it was entirely ready for her reception, and she took possession of it on the 3rd of June. Early on the following morn-

ing, she was attacked with difficulty of breathing, a symptom from which she had suffered on previous occasions, but which had been lightly treated by the physicians consulted. Finding herself becoming rapidly worse, she called for assistance, and medical aid was instantly sent for, while, in the meantime, every remedy that could be suggested was applied, but in vain. She gradually sank, and expired at the last, tranquil as a sleeping infant; so that, not even those who hung trembling over her, could fix with precision the moment when she drew her latest breath. Enlargement of the heart, which was proved on examination to have commenced at least five and twenty years previously, was the cause of her death. Possibly the change of air and mode of life, the unusual exertion she had undergone during her stay in Paris, and the excitement attendant on the removal, may have accelerated the crisis, but that such a malady must soon have had a fatal result, was inevitable.

It is many years since the death of any individual, however eminent, has produced the same sensation as that of Lady Blessington. A halo of interest, admiration, and affection, had so long hung about her, that it seemed impossible that the light of so brilliant a star should thus instantaneously and unexpectedly be quenched. The announcement of her death was so strange and startling, that it was at first received with incredulity; but, when the fact was confirmed beyond the possibility of doubt, deep, sincere, universal, and lasting, was the sorrow felt and expressed. Great to all, her loss to many, is

irreparable. Those who knew her in her home circle, who shared her unbounded generosity, her tender friendship and protection; who witnessed her trials,—trials arising but too often from sources whence she had a right to expect nought but gratitude and devotion; who beheld her forgiveness of unmerited injuries, "not until seven times, but until seventy times seven," her courageous defence of the traduced at whatever personal cost—her thousand fine and noble qualities,—can alone feel the full extent of such a bereavement.

In all the peculiarities of her genius, Lady Blessington was essentially feminine; the tenderness of her heart, the extreme quickness of her perceptions, the keenness of her sensibility, the sprightliness of her wit, the freshness of her feelings, evidenced in her almost childish facility of being touched, interested, or amused, remained unimpaired to the latest day of her existence. In her works may be observed all these characteristics, united with an extreme readiness of invention, great humour, and a high moral tone, which was so prominent a feature in them, that innumerable members of the clergy with whom she had no personal acquaintance addressed to her letters of approval and compliment.

The remains of Lady Blessington are interred in France, a country for which she always entertained much regard; and which, on her removal thither, she contemplated the probability of making her permanent residence. They are deposited at Chambourcy, near St. Germain-en-Laye, the residence of the Duc and Duchesse de Grammont, between whom

and Lady Blessington the warmest and closest intimacy had existed uninterrupted from the period of her first residence in Paris. The monument is designed and erected in a most beautiful and retired spot, by one who for nearly five-and-twenty years had regarded her with a deep and filial devotion, and whose only consolation was to be found in paying the last tribute of tenderness and respect to her cherished memory. We allude to Comte d'Orsay, whose dying mother had with her latest breath exacted from Lady Blessington a promise never to leave her son, a similar promise having been made by him to Lord Blessington, who loved him with a paternal affection. This mutual engagement was kept to the letter, and the quarter of a century that they remained together only served to strengthen and consolidate the tender regard that subsisted between them. In Comte d'Orsay, Lady Blessington found the son that nature had withheld from her, and on him she bestowed that tenderness with which her heart overflowed. His wishes, his interests, were ever the moving principle of her actions; his friends were hers, and to love or dislike him (and her quick and feminine instinct never failed to teach her where either sentiment existed) was the best claim to her affection, or the strongest provocative to her antipathy.

On her tomb, the following Inscriptions, the English from the pen of Barry Cornwall, the Latin from that of Walter Savage Landor, render worthy homage to her gifts and virtues.

M. A. P.

IN MEMORY OF

MARGUERITE, COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON,

WHO DIED ON THE 4TH JUNE, 1849.

---

In her lifetime
She was loved and admired,
For her many graceful writings,
Her gentle manners, her kind and generous heart.
Men, famous for art and science,
In distant lands,
Sought her friendship:
And the historians and scholars, the poets, and wits, and painters,
Of her own country,
Found an unfailing welcome
In her ever hospitable home.
She gave, cheerfully, to all who were in need,
Help, and sympathy, and useful counsel;
And she died
Lamented by many friends.
They who loved her best in life, and now lament her most,
Have reared this tributary marble
Over the place of her rest.

---

Hic est depositum
Quod superest mulieris
Quondam pulcherrimæ
Benefacta celare potuit
Ingenium suum non potuit
Peregrinos quos libet
Grata hospitalitate convocabat
Lutetiæ parisiorum
Ad meliorem vitam abiit
Die iv mensis Junii
MDCCCXLIX.

# COUNTRY QUARTERS.

## CHAPTER I.

It was a clear bright day in the second week of December, 18—, when the sound of martial music drew nearly every female inhabitant in the picturesque little town of ——, in the south of Ireland, to the windows of their houses in the main street; and many a fair and smiling face looked forth with cheeks rendered more rosy than usual by animation, and eyes sparkling with pleasure.

The street, it being Saturday, a market day, was crowded by peasants, with their blue and

grey frieze coats slung carelessly over their shoulders, a bright-coloured cotton or silk handkerchief passed once around their throats, with the ends floating, and their coarse felt hats, beneath which their broad and strongly-marked faces were seen, excited into an expression half comic, half curious, as they eyed the portion of the regiment then marching into the town. The peasant women with their blue and red cloaks, some with the hoods drawn over their heads, while others, and chiefly those of the youthful part, wore simple white muslin caps, adorned with a gay-coloured ribbon, or a snowy dimity hood, from which their glowing cheeks and blue eyes peeped out to peculiar advantage, as half timid, half playful, like startled fawns, they drew near to the houses or behind the men, placing these last as a sort of barrier between them and the soldiers. The stalls in the street, covered with rural merchandise, were partly drawn back to allow the regiment to pass; while here and there a frightened horse or cow rushed wildly among the throng, terri-

fied at the sound of the loud drums and "ear-piercing fifes," and sundry pigs on three legs, the fourth held up by the cord attached to it, and retained by the angry driver, pursued precisely the direction opposed to his wishes, he uttering curses not only loud but deep on its obstinacy.

The hosts of the Great Globe and the New Inn stood on the steps of their respective doors, backed by a couple of waiters, anxious to win the officers to their houses. The Great Globe little answered to its high-sounding appellation. It was of small dimensions, built of red brick, of a very fiery hue: the door and window sashes were painted of a bright green, affording a striking contrast to its opposite neighbour—the New Inn. This last-named appeared to be the oldest house in the town, and not in the best possible state of repair. The host of the Great Globe was almost as rubicund in the face as his mansion, and, as if to render the resemblance still more striking, he wore green spectacles, to relieve an habitual inflammation of the eyes, was clothed in a

bottle-green coat, a red waistcoat, and wore a flaxen wig. He of the New Inn was a tall lusty man, dressed in a faded brown coat, a drab waistcoat, and wore a black wig. Each of the hosts stood on the tiptoe of expectation, bowing low as the regiment marched on, followed by a numerous crowd of idle boys and girls, as well as by the fool, of which race every Irish town possesses at least one. The waiters of the rival houses partook of the peculiar characteristics of their employers both in their dress and appearance. Their manner, too, assimilated; for, while the master of the Great Globe expanded his lips into a broad smile of cordial welcome, closely imitated by the man and boy, styled waiters, standing behind him, he of the New Inn maintained a solemn gravity only to be equalled by that of the two old men in sad-coloured suits who, with soiled napkins in hand, bowed every time he did.

And now the music of fifes and drums was changed for that of the full band, much to the delight of the hearers. The well-

polished brazen instruments shone bright as gold in the sun; the negroes, with their clashing cymbals, white turbans, and gilt collars, attracted general admiration, mingled with some degree of alarm, among the women and children. The portly drum-major was pronounced by various groups to be the grandest gentleman of the whole; and, as with head erect, protruded chest, and shoulders kept back, he strutted proudly on, occasionally throwing up his gilt-topped staff in the air, and adroitly catching it again, shouts of approbation followed the feat. The colonel — an elderly, dignified-looking man—rode at the head of his regiment, gravely glancing from side to side at the strange scene through which he moved; his charger champing the bit of his bridle and keeping time to the music, much to the amazement of the spectators.

Hanging from the open doors of the shi-been houses* might be seen youths excited by whisky, with the soft, dark down of manhood still unshorn on their upper lips and

* Spirit-shops.

chins, wildly throwing up their hats and swearing they would enlist; while endeavouring to hold them back were aged grandmothers, remonstrating mothers, weeping sisters, and blushing sweathearts, who prayed them "not to break the fond hearts that loved them by going to be soldiers."

The house of the magistrate—the most stately in the street—stood back from the other dwellings, having a small garden, well filled with laurustinus and arbutus, separated from the street by iron rails. The windows of this mansion were occupied with plants, through which young and blooming faces peeped forth sparkling with animation—the owners all unmindful that a cold air was blowing their silken tresses over their rosy cheeks in "most admired disorder," and tinging with red the tips of their little piquant *retroussé* noses. "Ah, what beautiful music!" exclaimed one. "Look, what a handsome officer!" cried another. "Which?—where?" inquired others of these gay and guileless young creatures.

On the opposite side was the house of the

doctor, with its shining brass knocker, well rubbed every morning, as the spiteful said, to make believe it had grown so bright by being constantly used by patients seeking aid from its owner.

"Just look at Fanny O'Farrell," exclaimed the plump and pretty Honor O'Flaherty, "how demure she looks! She pretends not to see that handsome young officer who carries the colours, though I'd lay a wager of a pair of Limerick gloves she knows every feature in his face as well as—"

"You do, Honor," interrupted Bessy Mac Henry, "who have never taken your eyes off his face since he came in sight."

"Is it me?—that's a good joke, Bessy. Just as if I had looked more at him than you did!" replied the blushing Honor, betraying some embarrassment at the charge.

"What do you think of the sight, Miss O'Neill?" inquired one of the young ladies of a lovely girl who kept rather in the background of the picture. "Did you notice the handsome young officer who carried the colours?"

"I was so much pleased with the whole stirring scene that I did not examine the individuals that composed it."

"That's always Miss O'Neill's way," observed Honor O'Flaherty. "While we, foolish giddy girls as we are, are admiring the red coats, she, I am pretty sure, was thinking of all the hardships to which this regiment has been exposed. O! I know her so well! Why, I had all the trouble in the world to coax her to come and see the regiment march into town; and I don't believe she would have come at last if her grandmother had not persuaded her."

"I must plead guilty to your charge, Honor," replied the fair and beautiful girl who answered to the name of Miss O'Neill, "for the sight of the faded and tattered colours waving in the bright sunshine, bearing witness to many a death struggle against the foe in a foreign land, *did* draw my attention away from the present in the midst of the gay scene, and for a moment saddened me."

"Well, you see she's not like us," said the

smiling Honor, "for, when our eyes were fixed on the colour-bearer, hers were only directed to the colours."

"I must say there are some very handsome men among the officers," observed Fanny O'Farrell.

"So you said when the last regiment marched in," remarked Bessy Mac Henry.

"And she was right, too," answered Honor O'Flaherty. "Wasn't Major Villiers, and Captain Elliotson, and Lieutenant Saunders handsome men?"

"They were not ugly, certainly; but the major had such a solemn face, he never smiled," said Mary Macchee.

"That was because he had bad teeth, and you shouldn't blame a poor man for his misfortunes," rejoined the laughing Honor, with a deprecating tone.

"We'll be sure to see all the officers marching to church with the regiment to-morrow," said Bessy O'Neill.

"Ay, and *in* church also," observed Honor.

"I hope that there is not among us any girl so unthinking as to bestow a look or a

thought on them in the house of God," said Miss O'Neill, gravely. "That would be very wrong indeed."

"You'll end by turning a Methodist, Grace, that's what you will," answered Honor O'Flaherty, "as if there was such a mighty crime in looking at these red coats."

"You mistake me, Honor," replied Grace O'Neill. "I think it just as bad to look at a black or a blue coat, or its wearer, or at one of our own sex, when we are in a temple dedicated to prayer."

While this animated dialogue was going on, the regiment had been drawn up on the parade, and were thence dismissed to the barracks; and the officers entered the Great Globe—that being the inn which, from its more flourishing appearance, promised the best cheer and accommodation—but, being found too small to contain the whole, the junior officers adjourned to the New Inn; not, however, without many regrets expressed by Mr. O'Sullivan, the host of the Great Globe, that his house could not hold them all, unless the young officers would consent

to occupy inferior rooms, and sleep three or four in each chamber. Breakfast being ordered, Tom M'Carthy, the head waiter, as he proudly termed himself, while busy in covering a very large table with a snowy-white cloth—the officers filling the windows of the room and gazing into the street—ventured to address the colonel:—

"Is there anything at all partiklar, curnel, that you'd like to have to yourself?" inquired Tom. "A divilled leg of a turkey? The Great Globe is famous for divils!"

"Give us the best breakfast you can serve," replied the colonel.

"Oh, and isn't it myself that'll be sure to do that same, and no mistake? Only, curnel, I thought that perhaps you'd like something quite partiklar for yourself, just to come up smoking hot between two plates, which I'd set down before you; for what's a divilled leg of a turkey if it is to be shared between so many?"

And he looked around.

"Is this neighbourhood well inhabited?" inquired the colonel.

"Well inhabited!" reiterated the waiter. "Faith, and it is, your honour: and a great pity it is, for that's what makes ould Ireland so poor, and will keep her so, too. There's two mouths for every potatoe; which all comes from boys and girls marrying and having children, when they're no better than children themselves. Poor crathurs, they bring starvation on themselves and their brats before they've got sense in their brains."

"You mean that the country is over-populated?" observed the colonel.

"Why, in regard that the children spring up faster than the potatoes, I do, curnel."

"When I asked you whether the neighbourhood was well inhabited," resumed the colonel, "I meant to inquire whether you you have many noblemen and gentlemen's seats about here."

"Oh, plenty, your honour. First, we've the Marquis of Snowhill, as great a nobleman as can be found in all Ireland, who has an elegant place within five miles of the town."

"I'm glad to hear his lordship is in the county," observed the colonel.

"Is it him, curnel? Faith, and many would be glad to hear it, too; but, if they haven't a headache till then, they won't suffer even from drinking hot whisky punch. Sure the castle is shut up, and not a soul in it but the ould porter and his wife. The marquis hasn't been in Ireland these twenty years and more, for the marchioness is an English lady, plase your honour, and she says the Irish air doesn't agree with her; so the marquis stays away on account of her health, and every sixpence of rent is sent out of the country to him, to be all spent in London. No wonder it's so rich; for sure many a thousand of Irish money goes to it out of poor Ireland, not a farthing of which ever returns to it. We have Lord Millicent, who has another elegant place, and a deer park; but he can seldom find time to come to Ireland, he has so much to do in England. One day you'll read of him in the papers arriving at Newmarket, and the next somewhere else. He's what is called on the turf, and that doesn't leave him a minute to look after his business here, which is a great pity; for, when

he used to come, he did a power of good. He used to have all the boys in the whole parish to go out beating the woods when he and the English lords he brought with him went out shooting, and every boy who had his legs peppered by the shots used to come home with his pockets well filled with ten-pennys. Oh! 'twas a fine time for the poor crathurs!"

The colonel, a grave man, looked at the speaker with wonder, while many of the other officers appeared not a little amused by his originality.

And now breakfast was brought in, and certainly no complaint could be made of its want of copiousness. Beef steaks, mutton chops, broiled fowls, crimped salmon, fried trout, with slim cakes, and griddle bread, and a profusion of eggs, cream, tea, and coffee, were spread on the board.

"This breakfast justifies the reputation of Ireland for plentiful repasts," observed the colonel, addressing the officers seated around the table.

"Is it plinty in Ireland, curnel?" said the

waiter. "I'll go bail, your honour, Ireland's the place for plinty for man and baste, provided they're genteel; ay, by my troth, and for a hearty welcome into the bargain."

"What is that?" inquired one of the officers, pointing to a dish of salmon, the white curd of which nearly concealed the delicate pink of the fish.

"Sure that's salmon, your honour, rale elegant Blackwater salmon, and a great dainty it is, as you'll find if you taste it."

And Tom seized the dish and handed it to the officer, who, eyeing it through his glass, declined it, saying, "No, no, that doesn't look a bit like English salmon. Nothing would induce me to taste it. Salmon never looks white in England except when out of season."

"Oh, murther! isn't it enough to dhrive a man raving mad to hear the likes of that," blundered out the waiter, "when all the world knows that the rale beauty of the Irish salmon is to have that elegant curd on it, which comes partly by nature and partly by the fish being crimped? Sure Ireland beats the whole world for salmon!"

The enthusiasm of Tom for the fish of his native land excited only laughter. Not one of the officers would taste the salmon, which led to his telling his friends in the kitchen, when he returned there, that "them English up stairs were, after all, a poor ignorant set, who did not know what was good, and were too prejudiced to taste a novelty."

"I heard that Irish beef was good," observed the colonel; "but this," pointing to some on his plate, "is tough and tasteless."

"Then don't judge of all the beef, curnel, by this specimen, for sure this came from the piper's cow, who had danced away all her fat, for the poor crathur had such an ear for music that she couldn't be quiet when she heard him playing, and that's what made her so lean."

"What nonsense!" replied one of the officers. "Quite improbable," said another; but no one smiled at the joke, which induced Tom to report in the lower regions of the Great Globe that "them English were mighty slow at taking a joke."

"That seems a strange fellow," observed the colonel, as Tom left the room.

"Very strange, indeed," said Lieutenant Marston. "Did you observe what a strange story he told about the piper's cow?"

"As if a cow ever could dance," remarked Lieutenant Hunter. "I ought to know something of cows, for my father has the finest in Yorkshire."

"You must never believe a single word the Irish say," said Captain Sitwell.

"A very liberal mode of judging," observed Colonel Maitland.

"I hope the Irish will amuse me. I like to be made to laugh; and the Irish characters on the stage always made me laugh, they had such a funny way of speaking," said Mr. Herbert Vernon.

"People pretend they are always uttering jokes; but I never can understand jokes. I hate joking—it's vulgar," observed Lieutenant Marston.

"Here's something, curnel, that'll make your breakfast sit aisy on your stomach," said Tom, the waiter, entering, with a smiling countenance, and presenting a bottle of Irish whisky to Colonel Maitland.

"What is it?" inquired the colonel.

"Faith, it is the rale potheen, and not to be matched in any house in the whole town."

The whisky was declined by all the officers, to the utter surprise, not unmingled with a contemptuous pity, in the breast of Tom M'Carthy, who shook his head when he related this fact to his friends in the kitchen, and said, "What poor crathurs they must be!"

When Colonel Maitland and Major Elvaston withdrew, the junior officers looked sadly at each other. Captain Melville was the first who broke silence, and, drawing a deep sigh, he exclaimed, "I fear we are doomed to die of ennui in this barbarous place!"

"Can't we get up steeple-chases, or races?" said Mr. Hunter.

"Or get the wild Irishwomen to run in sacks?—it's such good fun," observed Lieutenant Marston.

"Or get up balls with some of the pretty girls we saw in the windows as we marched into the town?" interrupted Mr. Hunter.

"Hunter is for getting up some love-affair already," said Captain Melville. "But he must take care of what he is about; for Irish fathers and brothers are ticklish fellows to deal with, I am told."

## CHAPTER II.

"WELL, I must confess that I never saw so many pretty faces in one church as to-day," remarked Captain Sitwell, as he and his brother officers sat lounging in the largest room of the Great Globe, appropriated to their use, the Sunday after their arrival.

"Then sure you'd see twice as many more, your honour, if you had gone to the chapel," observed Tom, the waiter, who happened to be then serving a bottle of soda-water to one of the officers, and who, as usual with him, lost no opportunity of joining, *sans ceremonie*, in any conversation going on in his presence.

"Indeed!" said one of the party, "I did not know that religion made a difference in female beauty."

"Troth and it does in Ireland any way, your honour."

"You don't mean to say that Roman Catholics are handsomer than Protestants," asked Captain Sitwell; "that would be too absurd; and not even all your eloquence, friend Tom, and I am ready to admit you have a more than ordinary share, could make me believe such an assertion."

"Well, wait and you'll see I am right," replied Tom, "for sure the rale beauties are the true ould Milesians, and them are all Roman Catholics, while the Protestants are only poor *Sassenachs*."

"But we're no admirers of old beauties," remarked the officer. "We prefer young ones."

"And, by my troth, you're right: but I only meant of ancient descent by saying ould," replied Tom with rather a contemptuous air.

"And who is considered the greatest beauty in your town?" inquired one of the youngest officers.

"Miss O'Neill is thought to be by some,

while others prefer Miss Honor O'Flaherty. Then there's Miss Kate Broderick, and Miss Bessy Mac Henry, and many more that's thought to be very handsome."

"But, for your own taste, which is the prettiest?" demanded another young officer.

"Miss Grace O'Neill, to my thinking, bates 'em all hollow," was the answer.

"I dare say that was the black-eyed, rosy-cheeked charmer who showed her white teeth in church by biting one of the very reddest under lips I ever saw in my life," observed Captain Sitwell.

"Not at all," replied Tom. "Miss Grace goes to chapel; and, as for biting her lips, or showing her teeth, though whiter and evener never were seen, she's not one to do the like. Her pretty mouth is always quiet, unless she speaks or smiles, which is not often; for, though she's mild as May, she's not given to smiles, except when she speaks to her good old grandmother, or to the poor, and then it's the smile of an angel, full of pity, and not of a beauty wanting to show her white teeth."

"'Pon my word, you grow quite poetical," observed the officer who had previously spoken.

"And so it is only to her grandmother and the poor that this fourth Grace shows her teeth?" said another; "but, as the poor abound here, frequent opportunities are afforded her of exhibiting her pearls."

"Is it she exhibit anything! No, sir, she's above it. She'd be ashamed to exhibit even her goodness, though many a one has found it out. But here's the big coach, with Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald, come to visit the curnel, I'll go bail."

And off hurried the waiter to receive the card of the baronet. Next came an old-fashioned chariot drawn by horses whose condition proved that they were not kept for mere show, but often officiated in the agricultural department of their owner's establishment.

"Ye gods! look at that turn-out!" said Captain Sitwell. "What a rattletrap, by way of a carriage! and the steeds, how high in bone, and low in flesh!"

A jaunting-car next presented itself, on one

side of which sat a red-faced old gentleman, with a young lady seated by him, and on the other an elderly lady of large dimensions, with a young lady to balance the vehicle. Soon after Tom, the waiter, made his appearance with six cards.

"They are for the curnel," as he persisted in calling the colonel, "and the major."

"Let us see them! let us see them!" exclaimed all the young officers. The baronet's card, thrice as large as the usual dimensions, was examined. On it was printed, "Ballymacross Castle" and "Deer Park," to show that he possessed two seats. "Mr. Mac Vigors, Mountain Lodge," was engraved on the second; and "Mr. Oliphant Hennessy, Rathdundrum Hall," on the third.

"They tould me to be sure and make no mistake, but give the cards to the curnel and the major only; or, if there were two curnels or two majors, to give to both of them."

"I find that, even in obscure regions, the natives adopt the English plan of showing attention only to field officers," observed Captain Sitwell, as he returned the cards.

"And for a good reason," said one of the young officers; "the old fellows are afraid of us young ones turning the heads of their wives and daughters;" and the speaker looked in the old-fashioned mirror between the windows, drew up his shirt collar, and smiled complacently.

The following day the barrack-rooms were ready to receive the officers, and the Great Globe was left nearly as deserted as its great namesake after the deluge, while the New Inn resumed its propriety and dulness, which had been greatly disturbed by the officers and their servants during the previous two days.

"The Lord have mercy on their sinful souls!" exclaimed the proprietor of the New Inn; "how fearful it was to hear them take *His* name in vain on every occasion!"

"But more especially when I handed them the bill," observed the demure and affectedly sanctimonious waiter, turning up his eyes to the ceiling until only the whites of them were left visible. "What a volley of oaths then burst forth! 'Your master is a

Methodist, is he not?' said one of them to me. 'He is a humble Christian, sir,' was my reply. 'He has drawn up a very Methodistical bill, however,' says he; 'and tell him from me that, judging by his charges, I should not take him to be much of a Christian.'"

"What signifies what such a foolish young fellow, without the fear of God before his eyes, says? It is but right, if one be compelled as a publican to harbour such sinners under one's own roof, to make them pay heavily for the accommodation, and all their spiteful remarks won't impair the value of the money I have got from them."

"That may be," thought the waiter; "but an unreasonable bill always puts people in bad humour to behave well to the poor waiter."

In a different spirit did Thomas M'Carthy, the waiter of the Great Globe, comment on the officers who had left it. "Faith and shure," said he, "they behaved quite genteel;" and he shook in his hand the liberal supply of silver given to him by the army, as

he termed the officers. "People may say what they like, but the English are capital men for paying their way. The divil a word they said against the bill; troth, not so much as a long face among the party, but out with the purses at once, all in as good humour as if there was no bill in the case."

"Indeed," observed his employer, "they were real gentlemen, and did perfect justice to the fine old claret I gave 'em. Irishmen could't have enjoyed it more."

"But it would have put more life into 'em, and they'd have been singing as gay as larks, while the English took it as aisy as if they were drinking water."

On Monday the clergyman, the magistrate, and the doctor called on the officers, not confining their visits to the colonel and major, but extending them to the whole corps.

"We shall have some fun, I fancy," observed Sitwell, "for the old gentleman hinted at dinners to come, and tea parties without number. An Irish tea and turn-out must be a delectable pleasure. They also spoke of balls to be given."

"A ball in a place like this must be amusing, at least for once; and Irish misses will have the advantage of novelty to recommend them, if one could get over the dreadful Irish accent, of which I have a perfect horror," said Mr. Hunter.

"Hang it, Hunter, it can hardly be as bad as the Yorkskire dialect, in which you excel," observed Captain Sitwell.

"Me!" exclaimed Mr. Hunter. "Well, that's a good 'un, however. I have always been told that I had not the slightest touch of the accent peculiar to Yorkshire."

"And you were told the truth," resumed Captain Sitwell; "for you have not the *slightest*. *Au contraire*, you have the most remarkable Yorkshire dialect I ever met with." And Sitwell gave so very successful an imitation of Hunter as caused a general laugh.

"I am told," said Lieutenant Marston, "that, if you happen to look at an Irish young lady at dinner, she instantly says, 'Port, if you plaise!' and, if you dance twice with one, the following day a tall, uncouth

brother calls on you to inquire 'what your intentions are.'"

"By Jove, that would be no joke!" observed Hunter. "What would my governor say to the alternative of my bringing home an Irish wife to Wintern Abbey, or being shot because I declined doing so?"

"Why, as you happen to be his only son, the probability is that he would prefer a son with an Irish wife to no son at all," replied Captain Sitwell.

"I never thought of that," said Hunter; "but, should I fall desperately in love with one of these young ladies, and be forced to marry, 'twould be a good excuse to the governor."

"Then you admit the possibility of being *forced* to marry?" inquired Captain Sitwell, somewhat contemptuously.

"I didn't exactly mean that," replied Hunter, colouring; "but, if these Irishmen are such savages as to insist on men marrying their sisters——"

"You see nothing to be done except to submit to their wishes?" interrupted Sitwell, sneeringly.

"You always interrupt one before you know what one is going to say," remarked Hunter, peevishly.

"I'm sorry for you, Hunter," resumed Sitwell, laughing; "but I see it's all up with you. You'll leave this place a married man, as sure as you're born, if any Sir Lucius O'Trigger of a father or brother should take it into his head that you should wed his daughter or sister."

"I'll bet you a pony I don't, unless I should happen to take a fancy to the sister."

"Or that she should fall in love with you?" resumed Sitwell; "in which case you would, I am sure, be too good-natured to break a poor girl's heart, or force her brother to send a bullet through yours."

"I am not so very good-natured as you may think," said Hunter. "Did I marry Miss Vincent, though every one allowed that *she* was over head and ears in love with me when we left our last quarters?" And Hunter drew up his shirt-collar, and glanced at a small looking-glass in the room, with the air of a conqueror of hearts.

"But you forget *she* had no brother," observed Sitwell.

"And if she had ten brothers I would not have married her," replied Hunter, "for I never will marry any girl I am not in love with."

"But why did you pretend to be in love with Miss Vincent?" demanded Sitwell, sternly.

"I did not pretend," replied Hunter. "I really thought I was in love with her, until after two or three days, on the march, I found I had quite forgotten her."

"And do you think you had any right, when so little assured of your own feelings, to trifle with hers, and make the poor girl believe you really loved her, and so win her affections?" inquired Sitwell.

"Have I not told you that I really believed I loved her until I discovered that out of sight out of mind? And, if I can do without her, if I never think of her, why should I marry her, I should like to know, especially as it would drive my governor mad?"

"A man of honour should think of all this before he tries to gain the affections of an amiable and innocent girl," observed Captain Sitwell. "And now, Hunter, that you are aware of your own instability of character, you will cease to be considered as such if you ever again play the unfair game you have been practising with poor Mary Vincent."

"But it isn't my fault that I have forgotten her," said Hunter, looking disconcerted.

"But it is your fault that you made her believe you never would; and that probably at this moment the poor girl is thinking of you with a misplaced tenderness which may long embitter her days."

"She'll get over it, as I have done," replied the selfish young man; "and, as she is by far the prettiest girl at Exeter, she'll be sure to find plenty of admirers among the officers of the regiment that replaced us."

"A supposition worthy of you," remarked Captain Sitwell, disdainfully, "and arguing little for your heart."

"Come, come, Sitwell, it is not because I happen to be your subaltern that you are to dictate to me on any other than military matters," observed Hunter, sulkily, his fat chubby face growing red with anger.

"It is precisely because you happen to be my subaltern, and that I wish you to do credit to your profession, that I shall always give you my opinion when your conduct does not please me. You are young, inexperienced, and require advice; and, however unpalatable it may be to you, I will not fail to administer it when I see occasion."

Some brother officers entering the room put a stop to the discussion, leaving all who heard it impressed with the opinion that young Hunter was a selfish and unfeeling fellow, while he considered himself very ill-used by the interference of his superior officer on a subject not connected with the articles of war, or the regimental orderly-book.

"What a confoundedly dull place this is!" said one of the officers who had lately entered the room. "Not a civilized looking being to

be seen in the streets. The women wearing the fashions of seven summers ago, and such clumsy ill-made shoes as would render Venus herself no longer attractive. The young men riding about on Irish hunters, of which we have heard so much, but which bear no more resemblance to English ones than their riders do to the fellows one sees at Melton. There is a certain indescribable look of pride and defiance in the faces of these young Irishmen, a sort of *gâre à qui me touche* expression of countenance that is very provoking. I sauntered with Melville into the environs after parade, and saw two of these Irish squires leaping their horses over the fences. The animals don't leap at all as ours do, but instead of clearing the fence they touch and go, making, as it were, two jumps instead of one. We stood still to look at these would-be Nimrods, rather amused, I confess, which they, I suppose, suspecting, left off their sport, and, confronting us, eyed us with a *fierté* that almost challenged a remark."

"Perhaps they saw you smile, and ima-

gined you were laughing at them," observed Captain Sitwell. "The Irish are said to be peculiarly susceptible of aught approaching to ridicule, especially from the English, and are prone to resent it. If, therefore, we wish to maintain a good understanding with the neighbourhood, we must avoid looking quizzical or smiling when we encounter these wild Irish fire-eaters, for I strongly suspect that not one of them would be satisfied by the answer given by the clever Frenchman who, happening to laugh when a stranger was passing by him, answered the question rudely and promptly put to him, 'Why did you laugh, sir, when I passed?' by the ready answer of, 'Why did you pass, sir, when I laughed?'"

"The fierce-looking individual in question rode remarkably well, I must confess," observed Captain Melville, "reminding one of the Elgin marbles, or of the fabled centaurs, seeming to form a part of their horses, so closely did they adhere to the animals."

"I hear," replied Captain Sitwell, "that the Irish gentlemen are not only capital

riders, but excellent shots and good fishermen. In short, that they are famous sportsmen, and very liberal in giving permission to others to enjoy similar amusements on their properties; a singular piece of good fortune to poor devils like ourselves condemned to country quarters in places promising so few *agrémens*. I confess that in England such liberality is rarely exercised towards the military, or at most is only occasionally extended to field officers who happen to belong to the aristocracy. Mere soldiers of fortune, or rather let me say of no fortune, are seldom, if ever, invited to share the pleasures of a *battue* in the well-guarded preserves of any nobleman or gentleman near to where their regiments happen to be quartered; or, if by some rare chance such an event should occur, they are given over to one of the gamekeepers who knows his business, which is to lead them where least game is to be found."

"You are quite right, for I have experienced this treatment many a time; but, grown aware of the manœuvre, I defeated its

success by privately exhibiting a golden portrait of my sovereign to the keeper, a hint he so well understood, that I was allowed to enter covers never meant to be profaned by aught less than a cabinet minister, foreign ambassador, or princely noble, who repays such stately hospitalities in kind."

"A capital plan. It is a pity that it cannot be oftener put in practice."

"Chary as we English are said to be of our money, even the richest have this reputation, our magnates are still more chary of allowing poor devils like us soldiers to partake the pleasure of shooting their game. This is a gratification confined exclusively to the rich in England; and, although the Irish gentlemen have no well-guarded preserves to offer us, no *battues* where a massacre of the feathered race takes place every season, I am by no means disposed to reject their civilities, and am ready to shoot grouse over their mountains, partridges in their fields, and woodcocks and snipes in their bogs. Nay, I am quite prepared to eat their dinners, though French cooks are not very

common in this green island, and to drink their claret, which is much more pure, as I am given to understand, than in England."

"And I am quite willing to follow so good an example, if the temptation should be thrown in my way."

## CHAPTER III.

The visits of the few neighbouring gentlemen who had left their cards on the colonel and major being duly returned, as also those in the town, invitations to dinner came pouring in, for when was an Irish gentleman found deficient in exercising the rights of hospitality? The colonel was requested to bring three or four of his officers, this being, as the writers of the invitations stated, the general custom of the country.

A public ball, to be followed by a supper, was announced to take place at the Courthouse in a few days, under the auspices of the neighbouring gentry, and the colonel and officers of the —— Regiment. Every female heart in —— beat quicker at this an-

nouncement, and the officers declared they would each and all attend, being extremely impatient to see the beauty and fashion of ——. Every mantuamaker in the town was busy in consultation with the youthful belles, whose tastes were exercised in the colours and forms of the dresses to be worn on this momentous occasion, while mothers and aunts regulated the prices, which were, as they stipulated, "on no account to be exceeded." Often did the young ladies entreat that *tulle* or gauze might be substituted for book muslin, or that sarsnet might be used for slips instead of glazed cotton; and then the comparative difference of the expense of the two materials was calculated on a bit of paper, and gauze and silk being *only*, as the youthful ladies said, little more than triple the cost of book muslin and glazed cotton linings, mothers were implored for this once to yield to the desires of their daughters with an eloquence only to be resisted by prudent mammas, with the fear of a lecture from stern husbands before their eyes.

"But the expense, my dear girls, the ex-

pense! and then, book muslin is so nice, and looks almost as good as new when well got up."

"And *tulle* and gauze dye so well, dear mother, and a sarsnet slip can be worn with every dress."

The book muslin, however, was decided on, the alternative being offered to the young ladies, either to go in muslin dresses, or to remain at home. The material being definitively settled, the colour became the next question. How many times did Honor O'Flaherty waver between a pink, a blue, or a white robe? Pink was so becoming, blue looked so light, and white so simple and ladylike; and then she deliberated on the probable effect of each on her peculiar style of beauty. Every woman, however plain, believes that she has a peculiar style, if not of positive beauty, at least of something approaching so near as to be frequently mistaken for it; and to dress so as to suit this imagined peculiarity becomes the object of each. The *fade* blonde, believing herself a languishing beauty, attires her person in blue

*celeste*, thinking that delicate colour the best calculated to show off her peculiar style. The brunette selects yellow, which she thinks makes her look fairer. The lady troubled with too much *embonpoint* chooses a dark-coloured dress, and the one with too little selects white, each quite assured of producing the desired effect. This spirit of coquetry, originating in the amiable desire to please, inherent in the female sex, was as predominant in the ladies of the remote town of —— as in Paris, that "Paradise of women," whose thoughts are ever fixed on witching the world by their skill in the secret arcana of the toilette. Bent on committing havoc on the hearts of the newly-arrived red-coats, the various fabrics of the loom to be procured at —— were examined, compared, and at length decided on.

One fair girl alone might be excepted from entertaining this desire to captivate, and this was Grace O'Neill, who declared to her grandmother that she preferred staying at home with her to going to the ball. "Indeed, darling, you *must* go," said the good

old lady. "You confine yourself too much to the house with me. You may shake your head, Grace, but indeed you do; and the consequence is that you are losing your fine colour for want of the exercise and gaiety suitable to your age, and a little dancing will do you good."

"Don't ask me, dearest grandmother. I really prefer not to go."

"And I, Grace, have set my heart on your appearing at this ball; so I will lay my commands on you for this once,—a rare thing between us, my child, for you are always much more disposed to obey than I am to command."

"But is it not foolish, dearest grandmother, for us who are not rich, to throw away money on a dress for an occasion that does not at all tempt me?"

"Ah! Grace, things are changed since I was a girl. Young persons now are wiser than their parents; ay even than their old grandmothers. But for this once I *will* have my way. A book muslin dress will not ruin us, poor as you think we are; and a flower

out of Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald's conservatory, to which we are always welcome, will be sufficient ornament for your head; and, with your pearl necklace, I doubt not that my Grace will look as well, if not better, than any girl in the room."

"Your partiality misleads you, dearest grandmother, and would make me vain if I did not remember its extent."

And Grace arose, and, clasping her arms around the neck of the worthy Countess O'Neill, kissed her forehead. "God bless you, darling!" said the amiable lady, her eyes filling with tears. "You are the pride and comfort of my life."

But our readers must permit us to make them acquainted with the grandmother and grand-daughter; nay, more, with the grandfather. The Countess O'Neill, now in her sixty-fourth year, was the widow of a General O'Neill who had long served in the Austrian service, his religion—he being a Roman Catholic—having precluded his entering the army in his native land. Of an ancient family—so ancient that its origin was traced

to one of the kings of Ireland—persecution and confiscation had for many years so diminished the once large fortune of his progenitors, that when left an orphan, when little more than a boy, it was deemed expedient that, furnished with letters of recommendation from the hand of a neighbouring nobleman to no less a personage than Maria Teresa herself, and with a genealogy containing as many quarterings of nobility as that of the proudest count of the Holy Roman Empire, he should proceed to Vienna and enter the service of the Empress. His good looks, gallant bearing, and, though last not least, his gentle blood, found favour in the sight of his protectress. He soon had a commission bestowed on him, with an allowance to support it with decent dignity, and he so well justified the favour shown him that he gained the respect of all who knew him. The young Irishman arrived to offer his services to Maria Teresa at a critical moment for her, for never were her affairs in a more hopeless state. Without troops, allies, or money, and with ministers incapable of

assisting her by their counsel, any other woman would have despaired. But her heroic heart and courageous mind sustained her, and the aid of England and her brave Hungarians lent her fortitude.

In this extremity, she convoked a Diet at Presburg, whither the young O'Neill, with other volunteers, followed her. He beheld her for the first time when, with the crown of St. Etienne on her head and the royal sword girded to her waist, she appeared before the Assembly with her young son in her arms. Attired in deep mourning—in that most picturesque of all dresses—the Hungarian—her appearance made a deep impression on all who beheld her; but, when she addressed the States in Latin, her youth, her beauty, and misfortunes, won all who listened to her cause. "Abandoned by my friends, persecuted by my enemies, attacked by my nearest relatives, I have no resource but in your fidelity, your courage, and my fortitude. I place in your hands the daughter and son of your king, who depend on you for their protection." The magnates, fired with enthu-

siasm, drew their sabres and cried aloud, "Let us die for our sovereign, Maria Teresa!"

Up to that moment, she had maintained an attitude of calm and majestic dignity; but, beholding the devotion of her adherents, she burst into tears, which so excited their feelings that they would willingly have sacrificed their lives for her at the moment. Nor did their enthusiasm in her cause subside until she had regained her rights and established a peace the most advantageous to her interests. In all the actions fought, O'Neill distinguished himself in his profession, and his promotion became as rapid as his most sanguine hopes could anticipate. He had, after many years' service, attained the rank of general, with the title of count of the Holy Roman Empire, bestowed by the empress as a reward for his bravery in several actions and as a proof of the high estimation in which he was held, with a pension for his life to maintain the rank to which he was elevated.

A longing desire to behold once more his native land induced the Count O'Neill to

visit Ireland. He was welcomed by the few persons still alive who had known his worthy father; and by all who remembered the handsome, manly, ingenuous youth who, twenty years before, had left that neighbourhood to seek his fortune in a country where his religion was no impediment to his entering the profession of arms, to which he was formed to do honour. Often had his fame reached the land of his birth through the newspapers, and his countrymen were proud of his reputation. But, when he visited them, his bronzed but still handsome face, his gallant bearing and fine soldier-like figure, with the military decorations bestowed on him, excited a warm interest in his favour among the men, and a still more lively one among the women, ever prone to admire bravery and military distinction. Many were those who, forgetful of his father when the son was left unprovided for and an orphan, now came forward with alacrity to claim acquaintance with the handsome and distinguished Count O'Neill, and to solicit his acceptance of their hospitalities.

Every anecdote connected with his childhood, or with his father, was now recalled to the minds of his new-found friends, to the surprise and admiration of those who well remembered the little notice taken of the orphan youth, who had now become an object of such attraction to those who had then neglected him. The Count O'Neill's servant, too, an Irishman, who had entered his service some ten years before, considerably aided in extending the reputation of his honoured master. He spoke of rich Countesses whose hands and broad lands it only depended on the Count to have accepted; nay, more, of princesses, as he described them, rolling in gold and covered with diamonds, who were dying with love for his sake, but whose advances he had slighted. He told of his having danced with the Empress Maria Teresa herself at the court balls, an honour seldom conferred except on kings and princes —of orders sparkling with jewels bestowed on him, with a heap, as he expressed it, "of diamond rings and snuff-boxes enough to fill a jeweller's shop." Patrick O'Donohough,

for so was Count O'Neill's servant named, had a lively imagination, and no ordinary eloquence in displaying it on all subjects, but more especially when the honour and distinction conferred on his master became his theme. He believed that in exalting the general in the opinion of all with whom he was acquainted, he took the most effectual means of gaining consideration for himself; and, as he really entertained the warmest admiration for his master, his statements were tinged with all the high colouring which an unbounded partiality and a profound respect could bestow. The old axiom, that no man could be a hero in the eyes of his valet de chambre, did not hold good in the case of Count O'Neill and Patrick O'Donohough; for, although the former was allowed by those who knew him to possess all the qualities which constitute a hero, in no eyes did he possess them in so eminent a degree as in those of his servitor, perhaps for the simple reason that not a single spark of envy mingled with his admiration; and of how few of the admirers of heroes could this be asserted!

"I wonder the Count never married any of those princesses, or grand ladies, that you say were in love with him, Mr. O'Donohough!" would one of the *femmes de chambre* of his acquaintance observe when Patrick had been boasting of the numerous tender passions his master had inspired in foreign lands.

"The Count," would he reply, "is too proud a gentleman ever to become the left-handed husband of even a queen."

"And what's a left-handed husband, Mr. O'Donohough?"

"It's a marriage contracted with a person of inferior rank, which, though tolerated in a religious point of view, is not openly acknowledged, as a marriage is between equals. A king marries, suppose a countess or a marchioness; he makes her a duchess or a princess, but he cannot make her a queen; nor her son by him cannot be a king; but the lady is known to be his majesty's wife, *à la main gauche*, as we say in France and Germany, which means by the left-hand."

"Ah, I see now, Mr. O'Donohough—I

quite understand, and I think the Count was quite right not to be a left-handed husband. It's for all the world like being a bishop's wife, who is only plain 'Mrs.,' while he is 'my lord,' and 'your lordship,' which has always made me wonder that any lady would consent to marry a bishop."

"And you are right, Mrs. Maroony. Husband and wife ought to be equal in every respect, which is the reason that I have remained single; for, says I often to myself, when I might have married far above me, which I might have done more than once, ay, or twice, if I had wished it—not that I am given to boast, God knows, but ladies *will* sometimes take a fancy—yes, and *real* ladies too—to persons far below their own station; but, like my master, I objected to a left-handed marriage. It would never have done for me to have my wife a countess, while I was only plain Mr. O'Donohough; and so I refused the offers made me."

The boasting of Patrick produced a great effect on his simple auditors. *He* who was supposed to have conquered the hearts of

countesses achieved an easy conquest over those of the handmaidens of the neighbourhood where he now found himself; for it is one among the many mysteries of the female heart, from the highest down to the lowest grade in society, that the man who has, or who is supposed to have, won the affection of women superior to himself is generally an object of attention to the rest of the female sex. Many were the aspirants for Patrick O'Donohough's affections among the pretty and coquettish maidens who waited on the young ladies in the neighbourhood,—but many more were the assaults aimed at the heart of his master by the young ladies themselves.

But Count O'Neill was accustomed to such attacks, and resisted them as a soldier of twenty years' standing, and great experience in the strategies of love as well as in those of war, might be expected to do. Nevertheless, while he was well guarded against the attacks he was prepared for, his heart yielded at once to the charms of a lovely and artless girl who never dreamt of

touching it, or of disputing the prize with those who were so anxiously striving to gain it. The beautiful Mary O'Halloran was surprised to find that the affection sought by so many competitors was accorded to her; but surprise was quickly followed by delight, when, authorized by his declaration of attachment, she allowed herself to become sensible of his numerous attractions and noble qualities. Her's was not a heart to yield itself unsought, or to dwell on the perfections of any man who had not evinced such a decided preference for her as might justify such a contemplation: but now, convinced of the sincerity of his affection for her, she abandoned herself to the contemplation of a character which every day's intercourse enabled her to judge merited all her esteem, and she repaid his attachment with a love no less fervent and profound than his own.

A new world seemed to open before this young and lovely creature as she yielded her heart to the passion that now filled it. The sky seemed brighter, all nature seemed em-

bellished, and love tinged every scene and every object around her with fairer hues. She dwelt in an elysium, into which the world's cares and thoughts could not penetrate; and she resigned herself to the happy present, as children do to slumber, without a fear for the future. Love was the magician that had wrought this change; and she only wondered, as she compared the *past* with the *present*, how she had endured the placid, monotonous course in which her days had previously rolled on, contrasted as they now were with such felicitous ones,—bright and blissful illusions of a first love, felt but once, and ever after looked back on as the halcyon days of life, the green oasis in the dreary desert of existence.

## CHAPTER IV.

Mary O'Halloran was envied by all her female acquaintance when it became known that the gallant, the distinguished Count O'Neill had demanded her hand; but even envy could find nothing to hint a fault in one so pure and artless as this lovely girl. The young gentlemen in the neighbourhood envied the Count, and expressed their regret that, while some of them were deliberating on the momentous question of proposing for Mary O'Halloran, a new competitor should arrive and bear off the prize.

In due time the marriage was solemnized, and the fair bride would have been the happiest of her sex had not the prospect of leaving her widowed mother damped her

felicity. Pressing were the invitations given by Count O'Neill that his mother-in-law should accompany him and his wife to Vienna, and make her home with them; and the timid but doting mother had at length yielded her assent, when the Count was summoned by the Austrian Government to repair to London, thence to proceed on some mission of importance, after which he was to return to Vienna with as much speed as possible. This last injunction offered a formidable obstacle to his mother-in-law's accompanying the Count and Countess O'Neill to Vienna. Her delicate health precluded her undertaking a hurried journey; nor did the Count think it right to expose his wife to such a trial under existing circumstances, she having been pronounced to be *enceinte* a few weeks before. What was to be done in this unexpected emergency? And how little time was there for reflection! It was decided that the Count was to set off for England forthwith, leaving his carriage for the use of his wife and mother-in-law, with his faithful servant Patrick O'Donohough, to es-

cort them to London, whence they were to proceed by easy journeys to Vienna, where he would make the necessary preparations for their reception.

The separation, though believed to be but for a short time, filled the heart of the Countess O'Neill with such sorrow that she deemed herself childish and unreasonable at being thus afflicted. Had there been time for reflection, she felt that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for her to refrain from accompanying her husband, notwithstanding her conviction that her doing so would prevent her mother from proceeding to Germany with them. But the whole affair had been so hurried over, the Count departing the evening of the day he received the summons, and the few hours that intervened between, her spirits had been in such a tumult that she knew not, until she beheld the chaise that was to bear him away, and was clasped to his heart in a parting embrace, how much above her strength was the sacrifice she made in letting him depart without her. She strained her eyes after

the carriage as it was rapidly driven from her sight, and, when the sound of the receding wheels could be no longer heard, she dropped into a seat, pale, and speechless.

Mrs. O'Halloran, pressing her lips to the icy brow of her child, whispered that in two days they should set out to join her son-in-law, while a pang thrilled the maternal breast at finding that she who had until lately been all-in-all to her child could not now suffice, even for a few weeks, to console her for the absence of her husband. She almost wished that she had not accepted a sacrifice which cost her daughter such grief, and expressed something like this to the Countess. She could not have had recourse to any better means of recalling her daughter from the all-engrossing regret to which she was abandoning herself; for the words, though not meant to do so, sounded like a reproach, and, clasping her arms around her mother's neck, she asked her pardon for forgetting, in the anguish of a first parting from her husband, the rich reward for this brief separation would be the blessing of

having her mother to share her home in a distant land. Nevertheless, she found tears continually chasing each other down her cheeks, though she attempted to smile at her own weakness as she wiped them away. She found her eyes continually turning towards *his* vacant chair, and remembered with a pang of agony not to be subdued, that every passing minute took him farther from her.

"Alas!" thought the tearful wife, "what may not a day bring forth? This morning I awoke the happiest of women, without the most remote dread of this heavy trial, and *now* he is hurrying far from me, putting miles and miles between; and the sea—" (she involuntarily shuddered at the recollection)—"the broad sea will soon roll between us. Had any one whispered a few hours ago the possibility of such misery so soon occurring, I could not have believed it; yet it *has* come to pass. We have parted, and while I look around on objects fondly—oh! how fondly—associated with him, *he* is hurrying through scenes where I have never

been, where nothing can bring me to his memory. How cheerless, how desolate must all scenes be where the beloved has never passed, where one cannot identify his image with a single object, or say 'here he thought of me!' But *my* beloved needs no such reminders. His heart will talk to him of his poor Mary! How he would chide her weakness if he knew how utterly unable she is to bear even a short absence from him. What a wretched soldier's wife I shall make, should he be called from me by a war! But I must not think of anything so dreadful."

When the Countess sought her pillow, the sight of that which her husband's head had pressed the night before, renewed her grief. She kissed it while her tears fell on it, and she almost screamed with joy as a letter slid from under it. "How thoughtful, how tender, how like him!" exclaimed she, eagerly breaking the seal and reading over a farewell as fond and as passionate as her own woman's heart could have dictated. He had anticipated all her feelings, all her regret: and every syllable in his letter dropped like

a healing balm on her heart. Again and again she read that precious letter, and thanked the Almighty Giver of all good for having bestowed on her a husband so worthy of all her love.

The second day after the departure of Count O'Neill, his wife, and mother-in-law, accompanied by a youthful and simple maiden, who served them, and by the faithful Patrick O'Donohough, set out for Waterford, where they were to embark for England. Mrs. O'Halloran, struck by the extreme depression of spirits of her daughter, and alarmed for its effects, had hurried her preparations for departure, and left an old and trustworthy servant in charge of her house and furniture until an opportunity should offer of disposing of both. Though she sympathized with the deep depression of spirits under which her daughter was labouring, she could not quite comprehend its cause. So short a separation ought, she imagined, to be borne with more fortitude; and she trembled with apprehension for the future, on observing how little able her

daughter was to submit to the trials from which no wife, and more especially a soldier's wife, can be exempt. "Poor, poor Mary," thought the fond mother, "may Heaven preserve you from any greater trial than the present!"

The travellers reached Waterford on the second day of their journey, determined to embark by the next packet that should sail; and, on alighting at the hotel nearest to the quay, the Countess announced their intention to the landlady as she conducted them to their rooms.

"I hope, ladies, that you will have a safe passage," said she, "for we have all been greatly shocked by the intelligence which has this evening reached us of the loss of the packet for England, which sailed three days ago from this port, every soul on board of which has perished."

A thrill of horror passed over the frame of Mrs. O'Halloran, and an instinctive movement drew her closer to her daughter, on whose arm she was leaning as they were slowly ascending the stairs. A faint shriek escaped the lips of

the Countess, and she fell into the arms of her mother in a deep swoon. She was taken to bed while still in a state of insensibility; a medical man was sent for, who found it expedient to call in another to his aid; and for several days the life of the bereaved wife was despaired of from the effects of a violent brain fever.

Alas! the fatal intelligence so abruptly conveyed to her was but too true; the packet in which Count O'Neill, with other passengers, had sailed, had gone down the night he embarked, in a heavy gale of wind, and the floating timbers of the shattered wreck, one of which bore the name of the vessel, revealed its fate. Long was it before the hapless widow was in a state of mind to comprehend the truth. She raved continually of the last parting with her husband, uttered frequent reproaches for being detained from joining him, and menaced those about her with his anger for keeping her from him. Her mother never left the room of her suffering child. Whenever, exhausted by fatigue, she reposed for a short time, it was always

on a small bed near that of her daughter; and she would allow no hand but her own to administer the medicines ordered for her. In vain the doctors warned Mrs. O'Halloran that she would inevitably destroy her own delicate health by her exertions and constant confinement to the sick chamber. No warnings, no arguments, could induce her to leave her child for even half an hour.

Patrick O'Donohough's grief for his adored master partook of all the fire of his character. The blow fell on him with such a stunning shock that for many days he would not, could not, believe it to be true. "Oh! no, it can't be," said he; "hav'n't I seen him often in the midst of the field of battle surrounded by the enemy, his nostrils open like those of a war-horse when it snorts at the sound of the cannon, his hair rising from his temples as if in defiance, his fine eyes flashing fire, and his white teeth exposed by his open lips; his sabre gleaming like lightning as he whirled it over his head, cleaving down those opposed to him, as the scythe of of the reaper mows down the ripe corn, each

stroke leaving a red stain on the blade? Oh! it was a grand yet terrible sight to behold him at such moments! and, as I think of him coming safe from such danger, I can't bring myself to believe that he could meet death anywhere but on the field of battle. Then he could swim as I never saw any one else do. He seemed as much master of the waves as of his charger, mounting and descending on them when they were in their rage as naturally as the sea-gulls do. And then to have such a hero go down in a common packet like any of the other passengers, and to have his noble body become food for the sea monsters and fishes, oh! it drives me mad; and I'm always thinking that if I had been with him, and couldn't save him, at all events I'd have had the honour and comfort of dying with him; and a great honour and comfort it would be."

Poor Patrick begged permission of Mrs. O'Halloran to go to England a few days after the news of the fatal catastrophe had reached him. "I have heard, madam," said he,

" that it was near the English coast that the ship was lost, and who knows but the body may have been cast on shore, in which case I'd bring it over for interment? Lord, lord, if he had died at Vienna, what a grand funeral he would have had! I want to go to the Austrian ambassador in London, too, and it's right for many reasons that I should; but, my master,—may the heavens be his bed!—having left me in charge of the Countess, I could not quit my post without leave."

Alas! the poor Countess was in such a state of distraction, that for many, many weeks she could not be appealed to on any subject, but her mother yielded assent for Patrick to proceed to England, he solemnly assuring her that his going would be for the good of his lady. Patrick departed, and tarried some weeks on the coast near to which the packet had been wrecked, but no tidings could be obtained of the body of his master. Day after day would he, with a couple of boatmen, row about the place pointed out as the scene of the disaster, praying, with a tortured heart, that " the sea

might yield up her dead," and endeavouring to peer into her depths to discover the object of his search; but all was vain; that noble form which still lived in his memory was never more to meet his sight, and, convinced of this, he proceeded to London to relate his sad story to the ambassador. This nobleman had been an old and intimate friend of Count O'Neill's, and knew Patrick, the fate of whose master excited the deepest regret in his breast. Patrick could have hugged him to his heart when he witnessed the tears he vainly tried to check.

"O, Count, sure it's no use crying," said the poor fellow; "remember that your friend has left a widow, the loveliest, the best of women; and, if I may touch on such a matter, she is likely to bring forth a child. God grant it may be a boy to support his name! Write to the Emperor, Count. If his mother was alive she'd be a mother to his wife and child, for she loved him like a son." And here tears checked the words of poor Patrick, as he remembered the distinc-

tion with which his departed master had ever been treated by the Empress.

"Write to the Emperor, Count, and remind him that one of the bravest officers he ever had has left a widow who will in a few months have a child; that she is the only daughter of a widow as noble in mind as she is poor in pocket; and that a pension for the Countess O'Neill and her child for their lives is the least he can give to prove how he valued the departed hero."

Patrick found a patient hearer in the ambassador, who lost no time in making such a representation to his Sovereign as led to a pension of three hundred pounds a year being granted to the widowed Countess for her life, with a reversion to her child, should it prove a girl, and the offer of an education in one of the military colleges, and a commission in the army, should it be a boy. This gracious grant was accompanied by a letter to the Countess O'Neill written by the royal hand, containing such high eulogiums on her departed husband, and expressions of such deep interest towards herself, as must

have soothed her heart had she then been in a state of mind to comprehend its kindness. But the hour was not arrived when such unexpected goodness could mitigate the violence of her grief, for her reason still tottered on its throne. The faithful Patrick, by the advice of the ambassador, proceeded from London to Vienna with letters of recommendation to some of the most attached friends of his late master, in order that the property of the deceased should be converted into money for the benefit of his widow, and, so anxious were the companions in arms of Count O'Neill to possess anything which had belonged to him, that every article of furniture in his apartment, with his swords, pistols, &c., were purchased at thrice their original cost, forming a much larger sum than had ever been anticipated. The Emperor had a copy made of a fine portrait of Count O'Neill which he possessed, and sent it, with a handsome watch, chain, and seals, and a valuable diamond ring, to the widow.

When after three months the Countess O'Neill, reduced to nearly a breathing sha-

dow, was restored to consciousness of her deprivation, she found her mother so changed in appearance as to be hardly recognisable. Her attenuated form and pale face appealed more forcibly to the heart of her child than all the reasoning that the most eloquent preacher could utter. In them she saw the results of care, anxiety, and sorrow, which had made such inroads on the life of her parent: and now, aware that in a few months she herself would become a mother, she felt more than ever disposed to fulfil the duties of a daughter, and to make an effort to live to repay the debt of gratitude she owed to her doting parent. She wished to live also to behold and bless *his* child; and a flood of tenderness gushed to her heart as she thought of her unborn infant. O! should it but resemble its father, that husband so adored, and so soon snatched from her, she might yet be able to bear existence, although happiness could never more be hoped for.

There were moments when the blissful but too fleeting days of her wedded life appeared to her but as a dream; and she asked

herself whether it could be indeed true that she had been so blest, and was now so desolate? Then she would look back, and remember how calmly had glided away her days until she beheld him whose loss had steeped her life in wretchedness; and would ask whether there was no lethean draught which could destroy the memory "that such days were, and were most sweet?" But her heart told her that, whatever might be the tortures which memory could inflict, she preferred them to forgetfulness of *him* who had been the idol of her life, and was now the guiding star that pointed her hopes to Heaven. No! she should hate herself could she forget him; and that existence, which could never more be brightened by a hope of happiness for herself, should be devoted to the care of his child. That the terrible shock she had received had not destroyed her infant seemed little less than a miracle; and for this boon she was, indeed, most grateful to Heaven. Always pious, the Countess O'Neill became now more so than ever. Her thoughts continually reverted to that better world where

no tears are shed, where no more partings are. There *he*, so passionately, so fondly loved, had preceded her; and there she hoped, one day, to join him. This blessed hope sustained her; and, when it pleased the Almighty that she should see the face of her child, should hear its feeble cry, and press it to her breast, she felt that, for its sake, she could submit to live.

The Countess O'Neill and her mother returned once more to their home, that home which when they left they believed they should enter no more. The day they again took possession of it was, indeed, a painful trial to the youthful widow; but, when she felt the bitterness of grief renewed, she pressed her infant to her heart, and remembered how baleful to its health would be the indulgence of the violent sorrow she found it so difficult to subdue. She had insisted on nursing her child, and her mother, aware how much this occupation would fill her mind and lighten the weight of affliction that had crushed her, approved the measure, firmly calling her daughter's attention to the abso-

lute necessity of the self-control to be exercised by a nurse. The dread of injuring her infant's health became now the fixed rule of the doting young mother's conduct, and, as she marked the effect of this almost heroic triumph over self on the child, she was repaid for it.

## CHAPTER V.

The faithful Patrick O'Donohough, a general favourite with the friends of his late master, met with great kindness and sympathy from them. Several offered to take him into their service; and the general who commanded the regiment in which Count O'Neill had formerly served, so strongly recommended him, that a pension of thirty pounds a year was granted to him for his life by the order of the Emperor.

"I must return to my duty," said Patrick. "My honoured master placed me in charge of the Countess, and in her service I'll live and die; since what else have I now on earth to do but to prove as devoted to her as I was to him?"

"But, if she should marry again?" suggested one of Patrick's friends.

"Marry again!" repeated Patrick, with an air of *fierté*, "after having such a husband as Count O'Neill? You little know her. No; she'll never look on another man with eyes of affection, unless God should give her a son who may resemble him. She's not a woman to love twice."

Deeply interested for the youthful widow by the artless but animated description of her given by Patrick, the brother officers of her late husband determined to send her a mark of their affection for his memory. They subscribed to her a tasteful and valuable tea-service, executed in silver, with a suitable inscription, which they forwarded to her through the Austrian ambassador in London; and Patrick returned to Ireland the bearer of eight hundred pounds, the produce of his poor master's effects at Vienna, and a considerable sum of his own, the gifts of his master's friends, absolutely forced on him.

"I'm come back, madam, never more to leave my mistress," said he to Mrs. O'Halloran.

"I am afraid, Patrick," replied she, "that our circumstances will not permit us to retain you, which I greatly regret, for we know how to value you;" and she sighed deeply.

"Faith, I was afraid of that, ma'am, and I didn't like to be a burden; but still I couldn't leave my charge. Sure the last word *he* ever said to me was, 'Patrick never leave your mistress.' And could I forget that command? I was always thinking how I could manage to obey *his* orders without being a burden to you, ma'am, or to the Countess; and I remembered that I was brought up to be a tailor when I was a boy, though it's a confession I never made to mortal since I went to Vienna, fifteen years ago; and which I hope, ma'am, you'll have the goodness never to tell to any one;" and Patrick looked around cautiously to see that no one was listening to this confession. "Sure, ma'am, I was ashamed of my life to think I had been of all things in the world a tailor, the ninth part of a man, as they are called, a dressmaker in breeches, saving your favour. It was hearing people everlastingly laughing

and jeering about tailors that made me leave my trade and go off to Germany with a young gentleman with whom I lived till he died; and then I had the honour—and sure a great honour it was—to enter *his* service who is now in Heaven. And often, and often, when his clothes didn't quite fit him, and I saw, plainly enough, for all their conceit, that them extravagant tailors at Vienna couldn't alter them to his mind, I have locked myself up and ripped the clothes, and pinched them in here, and let them out there, until I got them quite to *his* fancy; and then I used to be so pleased and proud when he praised them, that I was sometimes tempted to tell him the truth, and ask him to let me make all his clothes; but then the thought of being laughed at, of being considered the ninth part of a man, stopped my tongue, so I never let out the secret. But, as I was going to tell you, ma'am, when I suspected I might be an expense, a burden to the Countess and you, I determined to take a little room near your house, and set up for a tailor. I could work for six hours in the morning before

either of you were up, and get through a power of work, and be ready to serve breakfast, and do all my mistress and you required during the day; and I could earn enough to keep myself free of expense, and to put by something over and above for whatever might be wanted."

Mrs. O'Halloran looked her gratitude, for she was too much touched to speak. "But now, ma'am, this sacrifice of my pride—and it was the greatest I ever was willing to make—is not necessary, and I rejoice in it, for I believe I was a fool to be ashamed of an honest calling; but, when folly gets into the head of the young, it's hard to get it out after." And then Patrick entered into a full detail of all that had taken place at Vienna, delivered the Emperor's letter and gifts, assuring the pension, and wound up by handing an exact statement of the sale of Count O'Neill's effects, and the sum they had produced, to Mrs. O'Halloran. "Oh, ma'am," added he, "if I have an advice to offer, it would be that you and the Countess and *his* child, when it pleases God to send it, should

go to Vienna, where you would find friends and brothers in plenty for *his* sake; and where the Emperor and Empress, Heaven bless 'em! would stand by you all as long as you live. There you would see how *he* was adored; yes, ma'am, positively adored."

Faithfully did Patrick serve his mistress, and fondly did he doat on the little daughter of his never-forgotten master, though when she first saw the light he regretted that God had not sent a son to bear the Count's title, and in due time go to Vienna. But, as the child grew up, he became reconciled to her sex, and almost worshipped her. Mrs. O'Halloran died some few years after, and the Countess O'Neill, a delicate invalid, almost constantly confined to the house, found every day what a treasure she possessed in the faithful servant of her departed husband. He managed her little property so judiciously, being, at once her housekeeper, cook, and butler, that, at the end of every year, she discovered that such savings had been effected by Patrick that the fund appropriated as a marriage portion for her

daughter was daily increasing. Her deep devotion to the memory of her departed husband had caused Patrick to look up to her with a reverence never surpassed. He considered her, and he was not wrong in his belief, as one of the most faultless of her sex, "a perfect saint," he used to say, "whose heart was set on Heaven, where *he* now was who had been too good for this world."

The child of his master grew up to womanhood, educated by her exemplary mother, whose delicate constitution she unfortunately inherited. Patrick taught her to ride, provided her with a horse, and one for himself to attend her, and made her a riding-habit (working in secret) which was the admiration of all the town and neighbourhood, and which was supposed to come from London, so well did it fit its fair wearer, and so admirable was its workmanship. His own clothes were also manufactured by himself, though no one but the Countess O'Neill was in the secret; and it was often remarked that no one wore such well-fitting garments as Mr. O'Donohough. At seventeen, Miss

O'Neill—for, in spite of all Patrick's representations and reclamations on the subject, she was not styled Countess, which he declared she was entitled to be, as the daughter of a count of the Holy Roman Empire—married a colonel of her own name, which, in Patrick's opinion, was a strong recommendation to the match. The colonel, like herself, was an only child—had lost both his parents, and possessed no patrimony, his commission being his sole dependence. He was then on leave of absence, and returned to his native land in search of health, he having lost that blessing by a long sojourn with his regiment in an unhealthy climate. In the course of his perambulations, he came on a visit to one of the neighbouring houses, and saw the beautiful Maria Theresa O'Neill. "A mutual flame was quickly caught and quickly revealed;" and, after a courtship of some months, which disclosed the many estimable qualities of the suitor, the Countess O'Neill consented to the union of the lovers.

"Sure, madam," said Patrick, who, presuming on his attachment and long services,

considered he had a right to offer his opinion, "what more could be desired? Is he not an Irishman, a colonel, and an O'Neill? A brave soldier, as I have often heard her father, who is in Heaven, say, is worthy of any alliance. The darling child is not strong enough to bear disappointment; so, in God's name, let her have the man of her heart."

This simple reasoning was all-powerful with the fond mother. She bestowed her daughter's hand on the colonel, who became an inmate of the maternal roof, adding largely to its happiness, until ten months after, when Mrs. O'Neill expired in giving birth to a daughter, leaving her husband and her mother plunged in the deepest grief. The poor infant—all that now remained of a daughter she had adored—was received into the arms of its sorrowing grandmother, and was so fondly cherished, so tenderly cared for, that, contrary to the prediction of all the neighbours, it grew and prospered, to reward, by its infantile smiles, her who from the hour of its birth had devoted herself to it. Silent grief, acting on the shattered

health of the bereaved husband, rendered it soon apparent that he could not long survive his beloved wife. In seven months, he followed her to the tomb, having bequeathed his child to her grandmother, well convinced that in that amiable woman she would find the tenderest of mothers.

Even on this occasion the faithful Patrick proved the judicious friend of the family. Seeing the danger of Colonel O'Neill, and entertaining little hope of his recovery, he suggested to him the prudence of selling his commission and investing the money it produced for the use of his child. The suggestion was immediately adopted, and four months after the sale was effected and the produce secured to the child, the Countess O'Neill being named guardian to her granddaughter and executrix to the colonel's will. The heavy trials which had fallen on the Countess O'Neill had chastened her mind and purified her heart. She felt that the infant bequeathed to her care required that *she* should quell her grief if she hoped to live long enough to fulfil the duties of the task

she had undertaken, and thenceforth she bent all her thoughts to its fulfilment. Often would she consent to partake some delicacy which the watchful forethought of Patrick had prepared for her, when he urged the necessity of her keeping up her strength for the sake of the darling Miss Grace, for so was the child named.

"Sure, madam, how can you hope to live to see her grow up if you won't take nourishment enough to keep life and soul together, but go on only tasting one little thing or another, just for all the world as if you were a sparrow?"

Often might Patrick be seen rolling the Countess in a garden-chair which he had provided, with the child on her knee; and as often might he be seen dancing the baby in his arms, and singing to her, "for fear," as he used to say, "she would grow up dull in so quiet and silent a house, where a laugh or a loud word was never heard." And the child soon learned to know and love her humble friend. She would hold out her little dimpled hands the moment he entered, crow and

smile the moment he offered to take her; and he would say, while he wiped a tear from his eye, that he could fancy sometimes that he was in a dream, and that it was his blessed master's own child instead of his grandchild he was looking on, the mother and daughter were so exactly alike.

"Well, to think that I, who was a gay young man at Vienna," would Patrick say, "going to the wine-shops with my companions and dancing with the pretty girls at fêtes, should have passed away my youth nursing child after child, and the Countess, poor dear lady, into the bargain! But what could they do without me? Sure God is good. If *He* lets trouble and sorrow fall on some, *He* puts it into the hearts of others to be of use to 'em; ay, and teaches 'em how. I never could have believed that ever I could learn to be a nurse or a cook, and sure I'm both—through the force of necessity; for I do believe that if I had not had the thought to learn to cook a few nice things, and the perseverance to make the Countess eat 'em in spite of her inclination, she wouldn't now

be alive, after all the sorrow she has gone through; and, as for both the darling children I have brought up, they'd have died in their cradles if I had not kept up their spirits with dancing 'em and singing sprightly songs to 'em; though, God knows, I often did both when I was more inclined to cry than to sing. Well, God be praised, I have been of use; this is a consolation for having been a tailor. What an angel of a woman the Countess is, and so was her mother before her, never to have thought the worse of me after knowing this secret!"

Never did a miser take more pleasure in saving money than did Patrick O'Donohough. He confined his own personal expenses to so limited a sum, that three parts, at least, of his pension were hoarded and placed out at interest for the purpose of adding to the portion of the grand-daughter of his never-forgotten master. Nor could all the eloquence of the Countess ever persuade him to accept any wages, or any pecuniary gift, from her. Her small establishment—consisting of Patrick and two female ser-

vants—he managed with such strict economy, without, however, neglecting every comfort, and many luxuries, for the table of the Countess, that she frequently felt surprised when the amount of the disbursements, which Patrick regularly entered in a book, was placed before her every month; and wondered how, even in Ireland, so proverbially cheap, the expenditure could be so little. Patrick had an especial pride in this systematic economy: first, because it increased the little fortune of Miss O'Neill; and, secondly, because it proved his ability in housekeeping, and excited the wonder and admiration of the Countess O'Neill. He calculated every half-year the sums saved from the pension of the Countess, as well as from his own, and the interest thereon, also on the £800 produced by the sale of Count O'Neill's property at Vienna, with the sum for which the late Colonel O'Neill's commission sold. "She'll be no pauper after all," would he say, as he summed up principal and interest on a slate—a favourite occupation of his when he had a little leisure, and

which furnished a subject of wonder to the two women servants of the establishment, to whose questions he always replied that he was calculating the national debt, a reply not the less satisfactory because wholly beyond their comprehension.

The marriage and death of his master's daughter, with the birth of her child, and the death of its father, were duly announced to the friends of Count O'Neill in Germany by Patrick, who entreated the general who had formerly obtained the pension for the Countess and its reversion to her daughter, to have it extended to the Count's grand-daughter; and so well did Patrick urge the case, and so powerfully did the general advocate it, that the Emperor, who had not forgotten his brave officer and favourite, readily and graciously complied with the request; and a letter signed by royal hand was the first intimation the Countess had of Patrick's persevering and successful efforts to better the fortunes of her grand-daughter—the request he had made having never once occurred to her to suggest or to believe likely to be crowned with success.

"Faith now, Miss Grace will be quite an heiress—a real rich heiress," said Patrick. "The Countess blamed me for asking that the pension might revert to her; but don't I well know that the Count's faithful services and acknowledged bravery richly merited anything that could be done for his grandchild; and don't I know that she's more likely to get well married with a good fortune than if she had only her beautiful face and the noble blood in her veins to recommend her? Money, money is everything now. 'How much will she have?' is always the question; and if a young gentleman in love (and sure she has beauty and goodness enough to make any young gentleman fall in love with her) should forget all about money, isn't there always an old father or guardian to remind him of it? Often I've thought of this, and provided against it, so that Miss Grace may hold up her head with the best in regard to birth, beauty, and fortune. And Patrick O'Donohough has proved that though a man may have been a tailor he may turn out a faithful steward, and correspond with Counts

and a general, too, to serve the grand-daughter of his master, who, at some future day, will, with the blessing of God, when he meets him in Heaven, say, 'Thank you, my good Patrick!'"

## CHAPTER VI.

Such was the history of the grandfather, grandmother, father, and mother of Grace O'Neill. When we introduced her to our readers she was in her seventeenth year, and one of the most captivating and amiable girls in the world. A little above the middle stature, and exquisitely formed, with a profusion of hair, black as the raven's wing and of the softest texture, Grace was dazzlingly fair, with a delicate and transparent rose colour in her cheeks that paled or increased with every motion of her susceptible mind. Her eyes were dark blue, shaded by long and thick lashes, and might, whenever they sparkled with animation, have passed for hazel. Her long, black eyebrows were slightly

arched, and defined the commencement of a nose so finely formed, and in such perfect harmony with the whole face, that it might have challenged separate admiration in one less perfect; but, though each feature was faultless, the peculiar beauty of the mouth rivetted the gazer's eye. Small, with lips of just the desirable fulness, and so red as to make the cheeks look pale, they disclosed, whenever they opened, teeth white and even as pearls. Her face was of a perfect oval, which, with the fine features delicately chiselled as if a sculptor had formed them, gave a classical style to her beauty, without, however, any of the cold or inanimate character peculiar to sculpture. The symmetry of her figure, and the exquisite delicacy of her feet and hands—these last perfections considered so rare in her countrywomen—excited general admiration wherever Grace O'Neill appeared; and when, as sometimes occurred, remarks on the somewhat clumsy proportions of the hands and feet of Irish ladies in general were hazarded by English officers with more *naiveté* than good breeding, Miss O'Neill was trium-

phantly quoted as a proof that an Irishwoman had fairy fingers, and feet that the slipper of a Cinderella could fit. Unfortunately she was the single exception in the whole neighbourhood to the general rule—a fact which she only seemed not to know.

With such personal charms, Grace was wholly free from the alloy that but too frequently accompanies great beauty—vanity. Simple, natural, and unaffected, yet with a dignified maidenly reserve that enforced respect even from the young and giddy, Grace was one of the most amiable, as well as the most lovely, of her sex: and, although universally acknowledged to be so, excited neither the envy nor hatred of any of them. Each and all admitted her immeasurable superiority without a dissenting voice, or even the use of the disparaging (strange as it may seem) conjunction, *but;* nay more, her private friends, however incredible it may appear, were absolutely proud of her beauty. Although bred in so retired a spot, and where showy accomplishments could not be easily attained, Grace O'Neill was not deficient in

even these. A chorister of the cathedral in Cashel came twice a week to give lessons on the piano to a few of the young ladies of ——, and Grace, under his tuition, applied so diligently to music, that she, after some years, acquired a proficiency in it. She drew and painted in water-colours better than many young ladies who had been taught by expensive masters, though a love of nature and a strong desire to copy its works alone guided her in its study. The Countess O'Neill, when the crushing affliction of the loss of her husband befel her, found, after the first year of her sorrow had elapsed, her only consolation in reading. She fled not to novels, as women do to opiates, and men to even more condemnable stimulants, for a temporary oblivion of care, but had recourse to the perusal of history, in which the vicissitudes of life, occurring even to the greatest sovereigns of earth, taught her lessons of fortitude while cultivating and strengthening her mind.

This vast and well-digested store of information rendered her a most able monitress

to her grand-daughter, whom she had habituated to think and reflect, an art but too little attended to in the process of education, and the want of which precludes women from becoming the rational friends and companions of their husbands. Grace O'Neill had been taught to dispense with the luxuries which even the finances of her prudent grandmother could well afford in a country so cheap as Ireland, though all the requisites for comfort were granted. And, while the Countess, by a well-regulated system of economy, was every year adding to the portion of Grace, she was kept in ignorance of the real state of affairs, and believed herself and her grandmother much less rich than they actually were. Not that the Countess O'Neill would ever have condescended to aught resembling deception, but that she thought it most prudent not to reveal the actual state of her fortune to Grace until she had reached her twentieth year, in which opinion Patrick O'Donohough entirely coincided.

"Faith, madam," would Patrick say, "if some of the wild young men about here, with

good Milesian blood in their veins it is true, but with few guineas in their purses, knew as well that Miss O'Neill had some thousands of pounds safe in the funds as they know that she is beautiful, we'd never have a moment's peace or rest with proposals pouring in from the day she was fifteen up to this hour; and she herself, too, though she *is* the most perfect of God's creatures, might not be so easily satisfied as she is now if she was aware that she has twice a better fortune than any of the young ladies in her neighbourhood, ay, by my troth, or in the next city. Sure did I not hear the waiter of the Great Globe say t'other day that most of the young ladies at Cashel had only two washing gowns and three tunes on the piano for their fortune. Miss O'Neill would be for squandering her money on the poor, I know well enough, for she never can keep a shilling in her pocket when she sees 'em, and is ready to believe every lie they tell her."

We left Grace O'Neill yielding to the wishes of her grandmother in preparing for the ball; and, when the night on which it

was to take place arrived, that she stood before her in her simple but tasteful *toilette*, perhaps a more lovely creature never was beheld. Patrick was permitted to see her, a privilege of which he was not a little proud; and having walked around her, carefully examining her dress, he gravely nodded his head in sign of his perfect approbation, and drew forth a bouquet of beautiful flowers, which the gift of five shillings had procured him from the gardener of Sir Henry Travers.

"Thanks, good, kind Patrick," exclaimed his young mistress, as he loved to call her; "what rare and lovely exotics! Look, dear grandmother, how much finer these are than the bouquet sent me by Lady Fitzgerald an hour ago."

"Ah, poor lady," observed Patrick, "and much finer than she or her daughters will have to-night. They'll get the very refuse of the greenhouse, while that rogue, Tim Shaughnessey, has sold the pick and choice in the town for the ball for his own profit."

In a short time after, the sound of the wheels of Lady Fitzgerald's old rumbling

coach was heard approaching the door, and Grace O'Neill, having embraced her grandmother, and promised not to dance too much, and to be sure not to stand near an open window, nor to drink cold water, nor to eat ice while she was heated, descended, conducted by Patrick, who, with ill-dissembled pride, handed her into the coach.

"Well, isn't she a glorious creature, madam?" exclaimed he, as he returned to remove the tea-things from the Countess's little drawing-room. "It did my heart good to look at her, so it did. I'm sure there won't be any lady in the room to compare with her, and all eyes will be fixed on her at the ball. I'd like very much, madam, to step over and see how all goes on for an hour, if you don't want me. It always reminds me of the grand balls at court, when I used to get a place in the orchestra to see my noble master, with his elegant court dress and diamond stars on, dancing with one of the archduchesses. Though, God knows, the ball here is a very different thing from that at Schoenbrün;" and he sighed

deeply, a sigh which was still more deeply responded to by the Countess.

"But I suppose," resumed Patrick, "one ball reminds me of the other, because I went to the court only to see my master, and I go to this poor ball to see my young mistress. Often and often do I think how much more suited she is to be at a court ball than at one in the poor town of ——. But it all comes to the same at last. The bright eyes that shine at courts grow dim, and close, as well as those that dazzle the guests in far less grand places, and all go down to the narrow grave at last;" a truth to which the Countess assented with a melancholy shake of her head.

Patrick dressed himself with unusual care in order to do honour to his young lady. His black coat, nether garment, and silk stockings of the same sombre hue, showed off his snowy and delicately-plaited shirt-frills, in which a diamond pin, the gift of the general who commanded his master's regiment, sparkled; and his intelligent face and venerable white locks rendered him one

of the most gentlemanlike looking old men imaginable. As at the court ball at Schoenbrün, some forty years before, a place was accorded him in the orchestra, so at —— a seat was reserved for him in the gallery with the musicians, whence he could command a perfect view of the company.

"Just as I expected," murmured Patrick, *sotto voce*, "all eyes are fixed on her. How elegant she looks, and how she dances! That's a very fine-looking officer she is dancing with! How different she is from every other young lady in the room! They're drawing themselves up out of their stays, and bridling, and looking down occasionally at their tuckers, to see that the lace is not rumpled, or laughing too much with their partners, or using their fans too violently, or picking the leaves of their nosegays, and are too red in the face, and too determined to dance well, while she, calm and dignified, conducts herself for all the world like one of the young archduchesses I was thinking of a few minutes ago, now and then giving a little smile, or a gentle bow of the head.

She is not a bit flushed in the face, while the faces of the other young ladies are as red as peonies. She never looks down at her tucker, nor does anything else that the others do. No wonder that all eyes are turned to her. She's for all the world like a maiden blush-rose in the middle of a bed of tulips, the more beautiful from being seen near the gaudy flowers."

There was not an officer present that did not request to be presented to Miss O'Neill, in order to solicit her hand for a *contre-danse;* but Grace, mindful of her promise to her grandmother, only yielded it to two aspirants for that honour; and then, seated by her *chaperon*, Lady Fitzgerald, remained a pleasant spectatress of the dancers. Her first partner, the Hon. Sydney Mordant, hovered around the spot where she was seated, and rendered himself so agreeable to Lady Fitzgerald, by his well-bred attention to her, that she encouraged his advances without appearing to be aware of their motive. He frequently addressed himself to Grace, who replied in a tone of such modest self-posses-

sion as induced him to abandon the complimentary style he generally adopted to young ladies, and more especially those of the country, and to assume a more deferential one. Her second partner, Mr. Herbert Vernon, was equally disposed to be attentive, but the reserve with which he saw she received the advances of his friend, Mordant, checked his ardour, without, however, diminishing his admiration.

"Only look at Grace O'Neill," said the pretty Honor O'Flaherty to Florence Fitzgerald. "Did you ever see her look so beautiful?"

"She is too pale for my fancy," was the reply.

"Call her not pale, but fair," said Sir Henry Fraser.

"Ah! there you are with your quotation, Sir Henry, always ready. Why can't you speak from your own head, instead of from the heads of poets?" said Florence Fitzgerald.

"Because he is a sensible man," whispered Honor O'Flaherty.

"I'm sure that whisper contained something malicious against me, Miss O'Flaherty," observed the Baronet, looking suspicious and half-offended.

"What on earth could I find to say against you?" replied Honor, looking provokingly innocent.

"I hardly know; but when young ladies are so given to quizzing as some are," and Sir Henry looked reproachfully at Miss O'Flaherty, "no man is safe from their assaults."

"You must forgive me, Sir Henry, if, like one of my ancestors, I take the liberty of studying the antiquities of our common country.

"I dare say there's some hidden and uncivil meaning in that speech," observed the Baronet, growing red with anger.

"You wouldn't think so, if you had ever read O'Flaherty's 'Ogygia,'" said Honor, with a contrite expression of countenance.

"And what have I to do with the antiquities of Ireland, I should like to know?" inquired Sir Henry Fraser, suspecting some mischief.

"True, true, I was wrong; you are more given to the study of the middle ages, the florid Gothic," observed Honor.

And the Baronet, finding that she meant some covert attack on his age, grew still more red in the face, and walked angrily away.

"Haven't I vexed the *ci-devant jeune homme?*" whispered the sprightly and mischievous girl to Florence Fitzgerald, much pleased at having annoyed the Baronet, who, as she was wont to say, was "one of her favourite aversions."

"Give me leave to introduce Mr. Hunter," said Colonel Maitland, addressing himself to Miss Florence Fitzgerald.

A bow and a courtesy being exchanged, Mr. Hunter solicited the honour of the lady's hand for the next *contre danse*. She was engaged for that and the following one; on which Mr. Hunter requested her to present him to her friend.

"Miss O'Flaherty, Mr. Hunter."

Another bow and courtesy, and then followed Mr. Hunter's demand for the pleasure

of her hand for the next dance, which, after a pause of half a minute, was accorded.

"Are you fond of dancing?" inquired the gentleman.

"That depends on my partner," was the reply.

"Which means, I suppose, if he happens to be a good dancer?"

"Or a good talker," observed the lady.

"What has talking to do with dancing?" inquired Mr. Hunter.

"A great deal in the choice of one's partner. If he is pleasant and agreeable, I may like him for that; if not, he ought to be a good dancer. Few are both.

Mr. Hunter looked half puzzled, half offended.

"There may be differences of taste with regard to agreeable men, as well as of good dancers," remarked he, looking self-important.

"Indeed," resumed Honor O'Flaherty, "I always thought there could be but one opinion on these points." And she assumed an air of gravity.

"I used to be considered a tolerable dancer in England."

"And a pleasant talker, I conclude?" said Honor, archly.

He looked more puzzled than before. "Not less so than other men."

"Then I shall have two advantages in having such a partner."

He bowed and looked flattered, and, the sets being formed, led his partner to the dance. Honor being an exceedingly pretty girl and a very good dancer, Mr. Hunter thought her entitled to his peculiar notice, and she, having soon discovered his vanity and pretensions, determined to play him off for her amusement. Arrived at the bottom of the set, Mr. Hunter expressed his hope that she did not think him a very bad dancer, fully expecting a compliment.

"Not particularly; and I think that with more precision in finishing your steps, a greater attention to time, and a more *degagé* air, you might in time become a good dancer."

Mr. Hunter looked as angry as he felt, and

observed, that "in England he was considered a very tolerable dancer."

"Luckily," said the sly Honor O'Flaherty, "you converse so agreeably, that you may be pardoned for dancing less well than might be desired."

"My mother gave a splendid ball on my coming of age, and I opened it with Lady Augusta Freeborne, and everybody remarked that we were the best dancers in the room. That was a splendid affair. All the rank and fashion in the county, as the newspapers stated, and all the delicacies of the season, which means precisely everything *out* of season, and which is valued on account of the vast sums it costs; but my father has so large a fortune that he can afford throwing away money."

"I suppose half his life was spent in making money, and he passes the other half in lavishing it?"

"I did not say he *made* his money," observed Mr. Hunter, sulkily.

"O, it was your grandfather, then, that made it?" and Honor assumed a very innocent countenance.

To change a subject that was growing anything but agreeable to him, Mr. Hunter inquired "what was the reason that so many Irish families had an O before their names?"

"Because they were so wonderful," replied Miss O'Flaherty, "that the O was put to express the astonishment excited by that quality, and the descendants of those so distinguished still retain it."

"They are very foolish in doing so; for in England people only laugh at them, and often, when they introduce a ridiculous Irishman on the stage, put an 'O' or a 'Mac' before his name."

"A very clever and ingenious mode of disparaging us poor wild Irish," remarked Honor. "Nevertheless, I half suspect that you English are very jealous of our 'O's' and 'Macs,' and would gladly tack them to your names could you make out any claim to them. How well O'Hunter or Mac Hunter —which means son of Hunter—would sound! This last would be a proof that a man had a father."

"Every man in the world must have had

a father; so you have made a regular Irish blunder, Miss O'Flaherty;" and Mr. Hunter laughed heartily at his own remark. "Don't think I am laughing at my own wit," said he, noticing his partner's grave face.

"And if I did," replied Honor, with one of her most innocent faces, "you might be forgiven on account of the rarity of the cause."

Mr. Hunter looked more puzzled than ever; and, on resigning his partner to the care of her *chaperon*, told his friend, Lieutenant Marston, that Miss O'Flaherty was capital fun, said such droll things, and looked so grave while saying them, that one could hardly know what she meant, but that he suspected she was a little bit smitten with him."

"All those Irishwomen have such confounded accents that I can't stand them," observed Lieutenant Marston.

"Why can't they speak as we do?" remarked Mr. Hunter.

"They're devilish handsome, I must say," resumed Lieutenant Marston; "but, some-

how or other, they have an indescribable manner, half innocent and half quizzical, that prevents a man being at his ease with them, and makes him think they may be hoaxing him."

"No, no, they're not such fools as to attempt hoaxing one of us," replied Mr. Hunter; "they know better."

## CHAPTER VII.

The ball passed off as most balls do in a country town, where the youthful inhabitants, and more particularly in Ireland than elsewhere, delight in dancing, and have a decided taste for red-coats, and where a newly-arrived regiment awakens fresh hopes in every female heart under thirty that the newcomers may be as amusing as those that preceded them, and more disposed to marriage. Nor were the officers of the regiment dissatisfied with the acquaintances they had formed at the ball. The young ladies were pronounced to be "devilish fine girls," "capital dancers," and "very sprightly," though some of the juniors of the regiment declared, and Mr. Hunter was among the number, that

Miss O'Flaherty and her friend Miss Mac Henry were somewhat addicted to quizzing; but so they concluded most Irish girls were.

"What a lovely creature Miss O'Neill is!" observed Major Elvaston. "There is something quite different from all her companions in her."

"So Mordant seemed to think," said Mr. Herbert Vernon," for he never asked any of the other young ladies to dance, or even looked at them."

"A peculiarity which you shared," replied Captain Mordant, "for I observed you hovered about Miss O'Neill all the evening."

"She looked like an oriental pearl among false stones," said Mr. Herbert Vernon.

"A very poetical and pretty comparison," remarked Major Elvaston.

"I have been making all sorts of inquiries about the —— beauties," said Captain Sitwell. "Every one admits that Miss O'Neill bears the bell, though Honor O'Flaherty and Bessy Mac Henry,—ye gods, what names!—are not wanting in beauty. It cost me a handful of silver, expended at Miss White's

shop in shoe ribbon and bad *eau de Cologne*, to ingratiate myself sufficiently into the old maid's favour to get her to tell me all she had to say."

"How like Sitwell! I dare say he now knows all the scandal of the town of the last half-dozen years' standing."

"There you're wrong, Madden, for it appears that, wild as they are, no scandal attaches itself to these sprightly damsels, who are more disposed to laugh at than fall in love with their admirers."

"Nothing piques me into making love to a girl like hearing that she has an invulnerable heart," said Mr. Hunter, with an air of fatuity.

"How fortunate it is for pretty girls that your power of doing mischief does not equal your desire," observed Major Elvaston. "But I venture to prophesy that you will not damage a single female heart while we remain here, unless it be that of Miss White, the milliner, by buying more shoe ribbon, *eau de Cologne*, and lavender-water from her than any one else will do."

"Don't be too sure of that," replied Mr. Hunter. "If any man will bet me fifty pounds that I don't, in three months, make one of the beauties here in love with me I'll accept the wager."

The entrance of Colonel Maitland put an end to the subject, for Mr. Hunter stood too much in awe of his colonel to venture to continue it. The day after the ball, and several ones that followed, Captain Sydney Mordant might be seen repeatedly walking past the door of the Countess O'Neill's house, the windows of which seemed to excite a great interest in him, for he looked up at one after another, and was only repaid for his pains by seeing some peculiarly fine myrtles and geraniums in old-fashioned china flowerpots, which filled the small balconies. Nor did any one observe how often he walked in that direction, save and except Mr. Herbert Vernon, who by some chance pursued the same path as frequently, wondering what possessed Mordant to prefer that promenade to all others, though, had he consulted his own heart, it might have explained the cause.

The other officers had chosen another direction for their daily walks; and, more fortunate than Mordant and Vernon, were not disappointed in their object; for in the windows of Miss O'Flaherty and her friend, Miss Mac Henry, might daily be seen these young ladies, occupied in drawing, embroidery, or reading, not, however, so wholly intent on any of these tasks as not to cast many a glance into the street on the red-coats who, arm in arm, sauntered up and down, although the ladies affected not to be conscious of the presence of their admirers, notwithstanding that occasional loud laughs, or conversation addressed to each other from the officers, must have revealed their proximity.

"How did you like your partners, darling?" inquired the Countess O'Neill the morning after the ball.

"They appeared agreeable and gentlemanly," was the reply.

"You danced only twice, I heard, which pleased me, for I was afraid of your fatiguing yourself. Patrick told Peggy Morrice that your two partners were the handsomest men in the room."

Why did Grace O'Neill blush as she heard her grandmother utter these words; and, instead of confirming Patrick's report, merely admit its correctness by a slight nod of assent?

"Patrick used to be a good judge of manly beauty," resumed the Countess; and she sighed, remembering that his taste was formed on the fine specimen of it which her husband, thirty-eight years before, had presented.

"I believe Patrick was right," observed Grace, timidly, "for both my partners were very good-looking."

"Lady Fitzgerald, I suppose, told you that she left a note for me to invite you to the castle for three or four days, as they are to give a dinner to the new comers; to which they have invited the neighbourhood, and I have promised for you, darling."

For the first time in her life Grace O'Neill was disposed to be disingenuous with her grandmother, and to express her desire to remain at home with her in preference to accepting the invitation; but she could not

bring herself to utter the words, so remained silent.

"You have no objection, dearest," resumed the Countess O'Neill, "and I am glad of it; for a few days' fresh air will do you good, and tempt you to take exercise."

"I am never so well, nor so happy, anywhere as with you, dear grandmother," replied Grace; and another blush arose to her fair face, which the Countess, being short-sighted, did not observe, and concluded that, as hitherto, Grace was unwilling to leave her.

"The Fitzgeralds are so kind to us that I like to oblige them," resumed the old lady, "and I know I cannot confer a greater favour on them than by giving them your company sometimes. I have been thinking this morning about your dress, and Patrick has already had some silks sent here from Miss White's, from which I have selected two gowns, which are now in hand. So, you see, darling, all is arranged for your going; and you will, I flatter myself, be satisfied with the choice I have made."

"You are only too good to me, dearest grandmother," said Grace, embracing the Countess, who was quite elated at the anticipation of two or three days' recreation for her.

"I wonder will *he* be there?" thought Grace to herself. "Yet why should I think of him? What can it be to me whether he is invited or not? Lady Fitzgerald, or the girls, said nothing of it. If *he* is *not* to be there, I would rather not go. I wish I knew, for I shall be so disappointed if the other officers come, and *he* stays away. But I think he is sure to have been asked, for Lady Fitzgerald seemed very much pleased with him. How odd that I find myself thinking so much about him, when, probably, *he* has not bestowed a single thought on me! I must drive him out of my head, otherwise I shall be sure to blush when I see him, and I would not do that for the world. Nothing is so tiresome as to fall into a habit of blushing."

Such were the reflections that filled the mind of the beautiful and artless Grace O Neill for the next two days, notwithstand-

ing her repeated determination to think no more of Captain Sydney Mordant; and, when Honor O'Flaherty came to pay her a visit, and announced that he was to be among the guests at Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald's, her resolution of not falling into a habit of blushing did not prevent her cheeks from becoming of a bright rose colour, though luckily for her Honor O'Flaherty happened at that moment to be so occupied arranging an obstinate ringlet before the glass as not to have seen the blush.

"Grace told you, I suppose, dear Countess, that she danced with the two handsomest men at the ball?" said the giddy Honor, "while I was only asked by the ugly ones; and such a conceited fool as one of them was! I should have been bored beyond endurance if I had not, in self-defence, quizzed him all the time."

"How often must I entreat you to leave off this dangerous and unfeminine habit of quizzing, dear Honor?" observed the Countess O'Neill. "It makes enemies, and encourages strangers to take liberties and misjudge you."

"Now don't look so grave, dear Countess. I assure you I do all I can to check myself from making game of people; but, when I see a conceited fool, who looks down upon the Irish, and gives himself airs, and talks of his father's riches and grandeur, I can't for the life and soul of me help making fun of him."

"It is precisely this habit of making fun, my dear Honor, that gets our countrywomen ill spoken of. I speak to you as I would to Grace, and earnestly advise you to refrain from quizzing."

"I'll do all I can to follow your advice, my dear kind friend, and thank you sincerely for taking the trouble to give it to me; but, in order to keep my good resolution. I hope none of those conceited purse-proud fools will provoke me. I can't, like dear Grace, awe them into respect by dignity and reserve. My face and figure are not formed for it: I have always some nonsense or piece of fun coming into my head, and the least attempt to act the grand with me makes me break out into quizzing those who

try it; but I'll correct myself, indeed I will," and the good-humoured girl kissed the Countess O'Neill's hand.

"And in anticipation of your keeping your promise, my good Honor, accept the reward," said the Countess, drawing forth from beneath the pillow of her sofa a gown-piece, purchased that morning for Honor.

"O! what a lovely, what an elegant dress! Look, Grace, isn't it beautiful?" and Honor, in a state of perfect delight, danced round the room, holding up the dress.

"One of Miss White's young women is now in the house to take your measure for this dress, Honor. Ring the bell, dear Grace, and have her sent up."

"Was there ever such a friend, such a thoughtful, kind, friend?" said Honor. "Isn't it enough to make me conquer my folly, and endeavour to copy Grace's good breeding and reserve, instead of being a madcap wild Irish girl, as I know people have thought, and not scrupled to call me! Your goodness sha'n't be thrown away; you'll

see, my dear Countess, that I'll be an altered person, for such kindness is enough to correct even greater faults than mine;" and tears filled the eyes of the grateful girl.

It was by thoughtful acts of kindness like the one we have noted that the Countess O'Neill rendered herself little less than adored by her less prosperous neighbours. Mrs. O'Flaherty, a widow like herself, with an only daughter, was reduced from comparative affluence, by the reckless extravagance of her husband, to a stipend so narrow as to require the strictest habits of economy to keep up the appearance of respectability for herself and her child. Her husband died of a broken heart, when the consequences of his selfish folly were brought before him; and his late remorse had so touched the affectionate heart of his poor wife, as to make her forget not only the ill usage he had heaped on her, but the poverty he had entailed on her and their daughter, but to leave her a mourner for the remainder of her days.

But poor Mrs. O'Flaherty lived among kind hearts, and the evils of straitened cir-

cumstances were lightened by the thoughtful consideration and unceasing attention of her neighbours. Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald never had a sheep killed in his plentiful establishment that a joint or two of it did not find its way to her kitchen, on the alleged reason that he was quite sure her delicate appetite could not endure the coarse meat sold by the butchers at ——. The alleged inferiority of the poultry furnished the same excuse for her being constantly supplied with the excellent produce of his poultry-yard. Similar reasons were assigned for sending her butter and cream from his dairy, vegetables from his garden, and fruit from his hothouses; and such were the tact and the delicacy of the worthy donor of these good things, that it was made to appear that anything like a refusal to accept them on her part would be deemed a tacit avowal that she did not admit their superiority to what could be obtained at the common markets.

Another neighbour, whose housekeeper had acquired a certain fame for preserves, furnished, by the order of her employer, Mrs.

O'Flaherty's store-closet with an ample stock of jams and jellies; and the housekeepers of some three or four families, urged into emulation by their masters, vied with each other in keeping her constantly supplied with cakes, meat pies, and fruit tarts, so that few persons with triple, ay, quadruple, her income had so good a larder as Mrs. O'Flaherty, who often extended to others as well as to the poor the superfluous good things furnished to her by her generous friends.

A pretty dress for Honor, or a better silk gown or cloak or bonnet for both, were the not unfrequent gifts of the Countess O'Neill to her old neighbour and her pretty daughter, whom she often reproved for her too high spirits and propensity to quiz her acquaintances in general, but English officers in particular, when these last excited her ire by their unfeigned wonder or unrepressed smiles at what they termed her *Irishisms*.

Honor's mother, a half-heartbroken woman, who passed three parts of her day in weeping for the loss of the husband who had ruined her and her child, and the fourth in prayers

for the repose of his soul, was seldom a spectatress of the *escapades* of Honor, and, even if she had been, was too nervous and timid to correct them,—a fact so well known to the Countess that she endeavoured to supply the maternal care, of which she stood in need, to the wild girl.

Honor O'Flaherty was to accompany Grace O'Neill to Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald's, whose carriage was to be sent to convey them to his mansion. Honor's heart beat quick with anticipated delight at three consecutive nights' dancing, for it was the custom in that family, as in most others in the neighbourhood, that three dinners should follow each other, after which were to be balls. Patrick O'Donohough was to take his place on the box, by the side of Sir Geoffrey's coachman, for nothing would induce him to allow his young lady to go even a mile into the country without his protection.

The day arrived for the visit, Mrs. O'Flaherty came to pass the time of her daughter's absence with the Countess, an arrangement which generally took place on similar occa-

sions: and, as the carriage containing the two young ladies drove from the door, Mrs. O'Flaherty wiped her eyes, and observed, "What a happy season youth is, when the anticipation of two or three days' amusement can give such joy!"

"Yes," replied the Countess, "youth is the time for enjoyment, as age is for reflection."

"For sorrow, my dear friend; for what else can reflection bring to those who, like you and I, have lost the beloved partners of our lives?" observed Mrs. O'Flaherty, applying her handkerchief once more to her eyes.

"It can bring the consciousness of having fulfilled our duties to the utmost of our power, and the hope of meeting hereafter those we mourned."

"Ah! yours is a more hopeful spirit than mine! But you had not passed your youth with your husband, you had not wept for years over his errors, and then seen him lament their results with an anguish that brought him to the grave, as I did, the recollection of which can never be effaced from

my mind. You lost the Count O'Neill ere yet the passion of the lover had faded down into the calmer sentiment of the husband, and you never knew the grief of witnessing his errors, or beholding his remorse."

"Poor woman!" thought the Countess, "the more faultless was my husband the less she thinks I ought to lament him. But I can overlook the error of a fond heart and meek mind, and pity the sorrow of my poor friend. Alas! the perfection of my first, my only lover, was such as to preclude the possibility of my ever knowing a second passion; and when I think of the noble being, faultless in mind and conduct as in person, to whom I was wedded, and compare him with the half-educated and reckless libertine, whose habits of intoxication and indulgence of low pleasures had alienated him from the good-will and respect of all who knew him, I could be angry that his poor widow imagines her cause of sorrow to be greater than mine!"

But no symptom of what was passing in the mind was revealed to her poor nervous

companion by the high-minded Countess O'Neill, who soothed and spoke words of pity and comfort to her, while other friends could not forbear from questioning the sincerity of a regret so unceasing for an object universally deemed so unworthy of it as the *roué* Philip O'Flaherty. But who shall judge the secret heart, or pronounce whether the faulty are not sometimes as long and as deeply mourned as the faultless?

## CHAPTER VIII.

"I HAVE a mind not to go to this old Irish Baronet's dinner," said Captain Sydney Mordant to Mr. Herbert Vernon, the morning of the day on which the said dinner was to take place.

"What would I not give to have the power of going in your place," observed the latter, "and of meeting Miss O'Neill, who is to be there? She is by far the loveliest girl I ever saw, and, whatever our countrymen may assert against the want of elegance in the manners of the Irish ladies, I declare that this descendant of the ancient kings of Hibernia is not only the prettiest but the best-mannered girl I ever saw."

"And I quite agree with you in opinion," said Captain Sydney Mordant.

"Then why hesitate about meeting her, when an opportunity is afforded?"

"Precisely because I think so highly of her that she might become very dangerous to my peace of mind. Fancy a poor devil of a younger brother, with only ten thousand pounds in the world to depend on, falling in love with an unportioned Irish girl!"

"*Et bien et après?*"

"Either breaking my heart in a hopeless passion, or breaking the hearts of my father and mother by marrying this charmer."

"The alternative, I admit, is not agreeable for a man who loves himself well enough not to be disposed to break his own heart, and his parents too well, to risk wounding theirs. But after all, as your elder brother has married a great heiress, who bids fair to give no olive branches to the genealogical tree of the ancient house of Mordant, I don't see why you, my dear friend, may not be pardoned for pleasing yourself, if you prefer love in a cottage, with such a divine creature as Miss O'Neill, to a marriage *de raison* with the daughter of some rich 'citizen' of credit and renown."

"If one could be sure that these divine creatures would not bestow on one a numerous progeny of paupers, a love-match might not be such a desperate affair; but, as poor folk always have more children than rich, the most unthinking fellow must shudder before he entails on himself the chance and misery of offspring, for whom he has no means of providing, and of seeing the woman he loves not only deprived of the elegancies and comforts of life, but depressed by gloomy apprehensions for the well-being of her children."

"The picture is not encouraging, I confess; yet how many persons with a similar one staring them in the face snatch a few months of happiness, and bid defiance to the future?"

"Those who do so are either so selfish as to prefer the gratification of their own passions to the happiness of the object, or are incapable of reflection. I am not of these, and consequently am afraid of knowing Miss O'Neill better, lest I might have to undergo a conflict between love and reason, which might prove too strong for the last."

"You are wiser than I am, my dear Mor-

dant, for I, on one point at least, resemble that good saint who called it 'all joy to fall into divers temptations;' not that I, like him, believe I could vanquish many of them, but simply because certain temptations are so pleasant. I wish, therefore, I could go in your place to Ballymacross Castle to-day, and warm myself in the sunshine of Miss O'Neill's eyes."

"And, were my card of invitation transferable, I don't think I would yield it to you on this occasion, my dear Vernon; for it surely would not be acting the part of a friend to expose you to a temptation that I dread to encounter myself."

While the friends were conversing, a card was brought to Mr. Herbert Vernon from Sir Geoffrey and Lady Fitzgerald, requesting the honour of his company at dinner that day, accompanied by an explanatory note of apology, stating that, "through the mistake of a servant, the invitation, which ought to have reached him several days before, was only now forwarded; and hoping that he would kindly overlook the mistake."

"By Jove, just what I wished!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon, throwing the card and note across the table to Captain Mordant. "I dare say the alleged mistake is all a hum,—that I am at the eleventh hour invited to fill up the place of some Banquo whom sudden illness, or dread of a boring party, will keep away. *Reflection fait*, perhaps the old Milesian, or his better half, or the young ladies, have only now discovered that I am entitled to have honourable stuck before my name, and have, therefore, sent me what Sydney Smith calls a soup-ticket. If I listened to the suggestion of my dignity I should decline accepting this tardy invitation, but to meet Miss O'Neill is a temptation beyond my powers of resistance, and so I shall go."

"And I also," said Captain Mordant, something like a blush bespreading his face, a suffusion of countenance to which he was by no means subject.

"Now, then, my dear Mordant, let us have a fair start. We have both danced once with this charmer. You had the advantage over me of engrossing her conversa-

tion nearly the whole evening of the ball, while I could only hover near her; but now, each for himself, we will start afresh, and by all fair means endeavour to win the prize to which both aspire."

"And, if you should win the lady's heart, are you prepared to demand her hand?"

"Decidedly; and, what is more, I can count on my governor and my mother's consent. Not that they might not blow up confoundedly at first, at the notion of a portionless wife, and an Irish one into the bargain; but, after having fought them into allowing me to enter the army, a measure against which they entertained the strongest objections, I may naturally count on their indulgence in this instance. I have only to be threatened with a pain in the side, and an attack of the chest, if they should evince any obstinacy at first, and they will consent to anything. This is one of the many advantages of being an only son, my dear Mordant; and inestimable they all are when one happens to have a father and mother who tremble at the bare notion of losing their heir."

"If such are your prospects, Vernon, you will have nothing to dread from any rivalry on my part. I cannot deceive myself into a belief that my father or mother would ever consent to my marrying a portionless wife, though she may claim regal descent from the Kings of Eoghain, and is the granddaughter of the brave and respected Count O'Neill, whose high character reflects honour on his young and beautiful descendant."

Captain Mordant was perfectly sincere when he thus spoke; but when, some seven or eight hours after, he entered the drawing-room of Ballymacross Castle with his friend, Mr. Herbert Vernon, and saw Grace O'Neill looking more lovely than ever, a bright blush giving increased lustre to her eyes, he felt it would not be an easy task to refrain from seeking to find favour in those bright orbs. Having paid the customary attention to his hostess and her daughters, he involuntarily turned to look at Miss O'Neill. The blush that had lent her cheeks so bright a hue had subsided, leaving them so transparently fair as to remind him of an alabaster vase through

which the light was visible, and he was debating within himself whether her beauty was seen to most advantage when thus pale, or when her cheeks wore the bright tint that coloured them when he entered the room, when a whisper from Honor O'Flaherty to the object of his thoughts once more brought a rosy shade to her delicate cheeks, and decided the difficult question, for he now thought that he had never previously beheld Miss O'Neill so brilliantly handsome.

Perhaps the hasty and timid glance she cast on him while the whisper was uttered had something to do in his decision, and the downcast lids which veiled those soft blue eyes, for some minutes after, confirmed it. What would he not have given to know what the whisper contained which could thus make the lovely girl blush? That it related to him he could hardly doubt, from her having instantly glanced at him. She had blushed, too, when he entered the drawing-room; but, as he was accompanied by Herbert Vernon, that individual might have occasioned the roseate suffusion. He

should have liked to ascertain this point, but how was this to be effected? He saw Herbert Vernon now approach Miss O'Neill, and address her, when she, calm and composed, as if one of her female friends had spoken to her, raised her eyes to acknowledge his salutation, but no change of colour indicated that she felt the slightest interest in the speaker.

"Strange!" thought Mordant, "Vernon did not cause the blush;" and a sensation of pleasure filled his breast at the conviction. "What if I approach and observe whether I may attribute the blush to my presence?" thought Mordant; and, before reason could whisper that such a step would not be in strict accordance with his voluntary avowal to Vernon that he had no rivalry to fear from him, he crossed the room and addressed Miss O'Neill. Before he could utter a single word, her cheeks assumed their former rosy tint, leaving him no longer in doubt that this beautiful change of colour was produced by no other than himself, and delighted at the certainty.

Sydney Mordant, although a remarkably handsome man, was so little disposed to coxcombry, that the plainest and most insignificant of his sex, accustomed to receive only cold civility from the young and fair, could not have felt more elated than he did on the present occasion. The reserve of Miss O'Neill towards him was much greater than to his friend, Herbert Vernon, with whom she conversed perfectly at her ease, while to him there was a timidity not to be subdued by the efforts of the conscious girl, which led him to the rapturous conclusion that she was not as indifferent to his presence as she wished to appear.

The company being now assembled, and the butler having announced that dinner was served, Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald, having offered his arm to an old lady, requested Captain Sydney Mordant to lead Lady Fitzgerald to dinner, and Mr. Herbert Vernon to hand out another lady; after which the rest of the guests, with due regard to etiquette, offered their arms to the rest of the ladies. Heartily did the two honourables of the party regret

the aristocratic distinction which deprived them of the power of sitting next the lady who occupied the thoughts of both; and greatly did they envy the men who enjoyed this pleasure, one of whom happened to be Colonel Maitland, and the other Sir Henry Travers. Honor O'Flaherty, seated between Major Elvaston and Captain Sitwell, neither of whom had she ever spoken to before, was as entirely at her ease with them, as if they had been old friends, and both appeared to be very much amused by her lively remarks.

Lady Fitzgerald presiding at the top of the table, and Sir Geoffrey at the bottom, were—"on hospitable thoughts intent"—helping white and brown soup, followed by crimped salmon and turbot with lobster sauce, declared by the *gourmands* of the party to be the most delicious they had ever tasted. But these delicacies were replaced by a huge boiled turkey, white as the damask table-cloth on which the silver dish which contained it was placed, and covered with celery sauce; *vis à vis* to which was a smoking

haunch of venison, the fat of which did honour to the deer-park of the old Baronet; with a ham of no ordinary dimensions, flanked by a pigeon pie of similar proportions and four copious *entrées*.

The English portion of the company stared with astonishment at the profusion of the dinner, which reminded some of them of the line in Lewis's poem—

"The tables they groaned with the weight of the feast,"

which was almost literally borne out, for the sideboard displayed a smoking baron of beef, a quarter of cold lamb, a venison pasty, and sundry other dainties, with "all appliances to boot," calculated to satisfy a good appetite, or excite a jaded one. In vain did Captain Sydney Mordant offer his services to Lady Fitzgerald to help the fish, or carve the turkey or game that succeeded it. The hostess declared that carving was a positive pleasure to her instead of a trouble, and that Irish ladies and gentlemen infinitely preferred the old fashion of helping their guests

to the new one adopted in England of having the *relevées* carved by the maître d'hôtel on the sideboard.

It is true the flushed cheeks of Lady Fitzgerald, from the operation, and her unceasing attention to her guests, exemplified by anxious glances cast around on their plates, and "becks andnods" (though not wreathed smiles) to the attendants, induced a comparison in the minds of some between the advantages or disadvantages of her discharge of the duties of her social system, or the perfect *nonchalance* with which an English lady sits at her own table, leaving the comfort of her guests to the well-drilled servants, who, placed behind their chairs, glide rapidly and noiselessly as ghosts to supply their wants almost before they are expressed.

But the epicurean portion of the dinner party were disposed to admit the superiority of the Irish fashion when they beheld the delicate morsels carved by one who well understood the whereabouts, and how they should be cut, and remembered the jagged lumps or too thin slices—the too much or

too little gravy—served to them from the *buffet* of some aristocratic *salle à manger* in England, and consoled them for the trouble their hostess was giving herself by the reflection that she was used to it, and had prepared herself by a copious luncheon for the privation of having no dinner.

The wines were pronounced to be excellent, and were as profusely served as the dinner. The claret was found to be of a very different quality from the wine of the same name met with at English tables, owing to its not having passed through the spirit-giving medium of the cellar of an English wine-merchant, who prepares it for the taste of his countrymen, while Irish gentlemen import their own from Bordeaux. Repeated bumpers, pressed on his guests by the hospitable Baronet, proved that it was a beverage that "cheered but not inebriated," and reconciled the English portion of them to the want of body or strength, as they termed the mild flavour occasioned by the absence of brandy.

The excellence of the viands, the goodness

of the cookery—which reminds a gourmet of that of *l'ancien régime* in France, before Paris was filled by hungry soldiers fresh from the battle-field, where the constant smell of gunpowder and scarcity of good food had spoiled the delicacy of the palates of the heroes, and led to the adoption of undue quantities of pepper and onions in the cookery—and the fine quality and liberal quantity of the wines, put the male portion of the guests into such good humour, that the most fastidious amongst them were ready to overlook the want of the noiseless steps and precision of attention which distinguish English from Irish servants, who are somewhat prone to run against each other and break china in their zeal to serve the company quickly.

Before the ladies left the dining-room, several vehicles of various descriptions, jaunting-cars predominating, arrived at Ballymacross Castle laden with the persons invited to the ball, and for whose reception chambers were prepared, in which they arranged their hair, put on their dancing-shoes, shook the creases from their dresses, and put on

their wreaths and bouquets. Had any inquisitive listener been near the doors of these tiring rooms, into each of which some half-dozen of young and blooming damsels were crowded, he or she might have been amused by hearing the disjointed exclamations of the occupants.

"Do, dear Bessy, let me peep into the looking-glass."

"In a minute, dear; but first let me see the effect of this flower."

"Bessy has had this same flower in and out of her hair seven times, to my certain knowledge," observed another.

"Do pin my sash, Mary, and I'll do as much for you," entreated a fair plump girl, whose dress only required this adjunct to be completed.

"I declare I have not been able to get a single glance in the glass, and I am sure I shall look a regular Blouzabella," remarked a sparkling brunette.

"Dear Kate, are you sure that my slip is not longer than my gown?"

"I'll look in a moment; but this ringlet

is so obstinate I can do nothing with it ; it looks like a broken corkscrew."

The *chaperons* of these sprightly girls were no less busy in an adjoining chamber.

" I declare my bird of paradise is nearly spoiled," said one portly dame of large dimensions while endeavouring to arrange the plume in a *berêt, à-la-mode* some ten years before. " My maid put it into the wrong bandbox."

" That eternal berêt and plume!" whispered a thin withered-looking woman ; " how tired I am of seeing it !"

" If it be true, as is said, that birds of paradise never while in life alight on earth, the poor birds are hardly used when dead, by being made to do duty in the turbans and berêts of half the old dowagers in the kingdom," observed a pretty young matron, *sotto voce*, to another youthful wife.

" How dreadful !" exclaimed a rotund lady, " my beautiful point lace flounce is torn in three places ! What can I do ?"

" Mend it," said the lady to whom the question was addressed.

"How do you think this gold-embroidered scarf looks with my turban?"

"Admirably! you look exactly like Roxalana."

"Much more like Bajazet," whispered the thin lady.

"Had I not daughters to marry I certainly would not expose myself to cold by coming twelve miles to a ball in a jaunting-car," observed one of the elderly ladies, who had hitherto been so busily occupied in arranging her dress as to have wholly forgotten that she had daughters.

"And I also would have remained at home but for the same cause," said another, holding a pocket-glass to a small pimple on her chin, to which she was carefully applying a bit of sticking-plaster. In short, the old ladies were all as intent on beautifying themselves as the young, though without the same excuse; namely, the desire of captivating an admirer who might become a husband. So inherent and undying is the desire to please in the heart of a woman, that it outlives every rational motive, and must be,

we suppose, like "virtue, its own exceeding great reward," for the efforts never after a certain age meet with gratitude from that sex to please whom they are generally made.

The junior officers of the —— Regiment not included in the invitation to dinner were asked to the ball, it being thought advisable to provide partners for all the young ladies, which without the presence of these gentlemen it would be difficult to do; besides, as Lady Fitzgerald observed to her hospitable husband, a due sprinkling of red-coats among so many blue and black ones had always a good effect; and so it proved when the ball-room was thrown open, for nothing could look more gay than the white dresses and bright flowers of the young ladies, and the uniforms of the officers, while the old ladies formed a parterre of what, in Ireland, are termed wallflowers.

## CHAPTER IX.

"You will oblige me, Captain Mordant, by opening the ball with my eldest daughter; and you, Mr. Herbert Vernon, will dance the first set with my second, Florence," said Lady Fitzgerald.

"What a bore!" whispered Mr. Vernon to Mordant, "just as I had made up my mind to dance with Miss O'Neill. This is the price of our dinner, I suppose."

Mordant envied Sir Henry Travers when he saw him lead the fair object who occupied all his own thoughts to the dance, but remarked with a selfish satisfaction, that the countenance of Grace denoted no pleasure on the occasion. Grace stood next Miss Florence Fitzgerald in the set, which al-

lowed both her admirers an opportunity of studying her beautiful face and figure. Sir Henry Travers seldom removed his eyes from her, but it was evident that she was more annoyed than gratified by his admiration.

"Poor Grace O'Neill will be bored to death by her stupid partner," said Miss Fitzgerald to Captain Mordant. "He is desperately smitten, and I suspect means to make his proposal in due form, to-night."

"Has he any chance of success?"

"What a question! It is one, however, that you would not ask if you knew Grace as well as I do; for she is not a girl to be influenced for a single moment by his ten thousand a year, although *he* believes few girls could resist such a temptation."

"Men capable of forming such an opinion of your sex, Miss Fitzgerald, do not deserve pity when they find themselves mistaken."

"Look at him! how intent, yet how foolish, he seems! Grace looks vexed. He bites his lip and grins, and,—yes, yes, I am sure,—as we Irish say, he has popped the question. Grace looks grave and dignified,

as she always does when she wishes to put an end to a subject. Yes, he has received his *congé*. Fool! he urges his suit again. It's of no use. See how angry he is! How he frowns! Grace looks more cold and stately than before; she speaks to him; and now he knows that all his pleadings are vain."

Mordant was deeply interested as he watched the scene pointed out to him by his partner, whose praises of Miss O'Neill had given him a favourable opinion of her. He wondered not that Grace should, without a moment's hesitation, refuse to accept such a suitor, for he considered it little less than an unpardonable impudence that such a man should presume to lift his eyes to so superior a creature; but he remembered how many girls he had seen gifted with beauty, of high birth, and not deficient in fortune, accept, with outward complacency, whatever might be their internal feelings, the proposals of men who had no recommendation whatever except a certain number of thousands a year, and he thought the more highly of her that she was not one of those worshippers of

gold. Had he only one quarter of the fortune of Sir Henry Travers, how readily would he lay it at her feet, and how ardently would he implore the consent of his parents to present them with such a daughter! A deep sigh broke from his heart, little in unison with the gay scene around him; and Miss Fitzgerald remarked to her sister, Florence, when the *contre danse* was over, that, "although Captain Sydney Mordant was a peculiarly well-bred man, he was not a lively partner."

Mr. Herbert Vernon lost not a moment in seeking Miss O'Neill's hand for the next dance; and Mordant, whose eyes involuntarily followed hers, thought,—but it might only be fancy, as he admitted to himself,—that she looked disappointed, and once glanced over at himself.

"There can be no harm in asking her for the third dance," thought he. "It would be really too great a sacrifice to refrain from dancing with her at all;" and, having come to this decision, he watched her movements, admiring their grace and elegance, and, above

all, the air of dignified but cold politeness with which she received the animated attentions of his friend, Herbert Vernon. Never had he seen Vernon so intent to please, and never had he seen him less successful in his efforts.

A faint smile, or a nod of assent or dissent, was all he could obtain from his fair partner; and the frank and open countenance of Vernon revealed disappointment when, the dance being over, he led Miss O'Neill to her seat. Mordant, fearful that she might be engaged again, hurried to entreat her hand for the next set, and, as he urged his request, observed with a thrill of delight passing through his heart, as a sunbeam penetrates through foliage, that a bright blush coloured her cheeks. Yes, *this* time he *could not* be mistaken, he was too near her, and there was nobody else in proximity to whose account he could attribute this change of colour. A beautiful smile followed it while she made the admission "that, although somewhat tired, she would dance the next set with him."

"Not for worlds, if you are fatigued," said

Mordant; "I am not so selfish as to desire a pleasure at any risk of fatigue to you."

Grace thanked him only by a sweet smile. "It would be difficult in England to see so many beautiful faces collected together at a country ball," observed Mordant, "as I have noticed to-night."

"Are you quite sure of this?" replied Grace, archly, "or may I not attribute the compliment to your desire of pleasing me by praising my friends and countrywomen?"

"There is only one thing I would not do to please you, Miss O'Neill, and that is to say what I did not think."

"If it be a weakness, I confess to it,"—and here another blush passed over her lovely face,—"but I do like to hear my countrywomen praised. They have been so often disparaged by strangers, their artless gaiety has been so frequently mistaken for levity, their frankness for boldness, that I am glad when they are well spoken of; and, although you have referred only to their personal attractions, I assure you their mental ones, when known, merit esteem."

"Were I to judge all by *one* admirable specimen,"—and here Mordant raised his eyes to the face of Miss O'Neill,—"I would readily give them credit for the possession of every charm and of every virtue."

Grace blushed again, but this time no smile followed the bright tint, and Mordant saw that his implied compliment had offended the delicacy of her to whom it was addressed.

"What an agreeable man Colonel Maitland is!" observed Grace, after a pause in the conversation that made Mordant feel ill at ease.

"He is an excellent as well as an agreeable man," replied he, "and we look up to him as to a father."

"As the daughter and grand-daughter of soldiers, I feel a particular interest in men of his age and standing, for such I think my father might have been, had it pleased Heaven to have prolonged his life."

The pensive expression of her lovely face, as she uttered this sentence, lent it a new charm, and her low sweet voice well accorded with it.

"Colonel Maitland would be flattered if he

knew the favourable impression he has made on you, Miss O'Neill," said Mordant, anxious to break the train of sad reflections into which the fair girl was falling.

"I am not so vain as to think so. Of what value to a man of his age and experience could the opinion of a person so youthful and inexperienced as I am, be?"

"It must be valuable to every man," was the reply.

"Pardon my frankness, Captain Mordant, and permit me to tell you that, if *you* attach any value to my esteem, you will refrain from compliments direct or *indirect*,"—and here she blushed again,—"for I never can divest myself of the notion that those who utter them have formed a low estimate of her to whom they are addressed."

Mordant was about to utter something to deprecate this belief, when Grace raised her head and said, "Not another word on the subject of compliments, lest you add to your sin of flattery."

"Fool that I was," thought Mordant, "not to have seen at once that this lovely creature

was too superior to the generality of those of her age and sex to receive praise with complacency. I have injured myself in her opinion by having tried such old and stupid means of conciliating her as might please other women, and she has given me a lesson not soon to be forgotten."

"I am, then, to suppose, Miss O'Neill, that Colonel Maitland addressed no compliment to you?" resumed Mordant, desirous to break the silence that followed her reproof.

"He paid me the most delicate of all compliments -- that of taking for granted that I did not like them, and of speaking to me as he would have done to my grandmother."

At this moment, Honor O'Flaherty approached Miss O'Neill, and, with a very arch expression of countenance, whispered, but not low enough to be inaudible to Mordant, "So, Sir Henry Travers has popped the question, I find, and got the belt, as he deserved?"

"Pray be silent, Honor. Such matters should never be talked of; and I can't conceive how you should know anything about it."

"You forget, Grace, that you happen to have a very speaking face; although your tongue is none of the most communicative, perhaps on the principle of compensation. Florence Fitzgerald, who, like me, has plenty of time on her hands to observe the love-making of men to other girls, because she has no similar occupation of her own, told me that she saw the whole scene, from the first introduction to the last sentence."

"I assure you that there is not the slightest chance of my ever changing my mind. Honor, I must insist that you will say no more on this subject."

"Not quiz him a little on his disappointment?"

"Not on any account, dear Honor; as your doing so would really offend and pain me."

"What a sensible and high-minded creature this is!" thought Mordant. "Inherent tact and delicacy have done the work of time, and, having been long accustomed to move in the best society, this advantage has materially conduced to form her mind and to polish her manners. There is a modest confidence,

founded on self respect, in her that charms me; for, while it has conquered all the *gaucherie* peculiar to extreme youth and want of *les usages du monde*, it has not impaired, in the slightest degree, that feminine reserve which is one of the greatest attractions in a youthful maiden."

"Oh, Grace! I have had such a sparring match with Mr. Hunter," said Honor O'Flaherty aloud. "Now, don't look so horrified, dear Grace. You could not appear more shocked if I had clawed, instead of quizzed him."

"How can you persist in this odious habit of quizzing, Honor—a habit so wrong, so unfeminine?"

"You begin to scold me without knowing the extent of my sin against feminine propriety;" and the wild girl drew up her lips, and looked demure, in imitation of what she termed Grace O'Neill's prudery. "Before you condemn me, you should hear my crime. You must know that Mr. Hunter did me what I dare say he considered an honour—that of asking me to dance; and I was taken

so unaware, and I suppose was so overcome by the favour, that I consented to his request. But, no sooner had we danced down the first set, than he began to compare the grandeur and elegance of England in general, and of his father's portion of it in particular, with the poverty and uncivilization of poor Ireland,—a subject so unpalatable to me, that I am apt to lose all self-control when it is persisted in, so I could not resist the temptation to hoax him."

"Hoax! what a word, Honor!" said Grace O'Neill.

"A very good word, for anything I can see to the contrary, Grace. Why I hear all our acquaintance use it frequently."

"Can I never make you understand, Honor, that words which may be permitted to men, are not precisely what women should utter?"

"Do hear this modern Mrs. Primmer lecture me, Captain Mordant," said Honor, turning to that gentleman. "Is it such a shocking word, after all?"

The half-contrite, and half-comic, counte-

nance of the lively girl who appealed to his opinion overpowered his gravity, and he yielded to something more than a smile till, reproved by a glance of Miss O'Neill's serious face, he checked it, and admitted "that the word in question was more suited to male than to female lips."

"What a hypocrite you are, Captain Mordant! You were ready to burst into a hearty laugh when Grace's solemn face alarmed you out of it; and, to please her, you pass sentence against my good and expressive word 'hoax.' But I must finish my story about Mr. Hunter. I assumed a very innocent countenance, and told him I thought he must be a very condescending person to come to such a poor vulgar country as Ireland, and to dance with girls like myself, when, by throwing up his commission, he might remain in England, where there was no poverty, nor vulgarity, and where he might dance with Lady Marys and Lady Augustas at every ball. He seemed quite pleased, and said he did it for his country's good. 'You are not only a soldier, but a

patriot,' observed I, 'and it is no wonder that the Irish ladies, who admire bravery and patriotism, think highly of you.' 'Do they, indeed?' inquired he, pulling up his shirt collar, and glancing at the large looking-glass near us. 'Well, 'pon my honour, I am ready to allow that, though the Irish ladies have not the polish, the elegance—in short, the *je ne sçais quoi* of the English, they are, nevertheless, very fine girls.'"

"'How proud they'd be if they knew you think so!'

"'O! I assure you I have told my opinion to several of my brother officers.'"

"'I hope it won't get known to my poor countrywomen, for it would turn their heads, and encourage them all to fall in love with you.'"

"Honor, can it be possible that you compromised the dignity of your sex in this dreadful manner?" demanded Grace O'Neill, her face flushed with shame.

"'To have them *all* in love with me would be too much of a good thing,' said the vain fool; 'but I should not be sorry to make an impression on the hearts of a few.'"

"I have played my part so well," continued the arch girl, "as to make him believe that not only I, but half my female friends, are deeply smitten with him, and have left him in a fool's paradise of pleasure."

"Honor, I am seriously angry with you for thus letting down the dignity of our sex for the puerile amusement of the moment, and for drawing on us all the impertinence of this foolish young man. What must he think of us?"

"I flatter myself that he is now thinking of *me* only, for my flattery has proved such a good bait that he has swallowed it, hook and all; and, if I don't play with this odd fish for my diversion, as the angler does with a large one that he has safely hooked, my name is not Honor O'Flaherty."

Grace O'Neill looked so much ashamed and distressed, that Captain Mordant, though really amused by the comic manner in which Honor O'Flaherty related the scene with Mr. Hunter, did not indulge his risible muscles, and promised his fair partner that should Mr. Hunter repeat the flattery ad-

ministered to him by her friend, *he* would make his brother officers understand that Miss O'Flaherty was only amusing herself at the expense of his vanity and credulity, while the incorrigible Honor entreated he would not spoil her joke, the *dénouement* of which she declared she felt assured would be charming; and then, seeing how much displeased Grace was at her levity, she walked away, saying that "some persons made harm out of every bit of fun, and looked shocked about trifles."

"She is a good-hearted girl," said Miss O'Neill, "but allows herself to be carried away by her wild spirits and love of fun,—besetting sins with too many of my youthful countrywomen, and which give rise to the most erroneous opinions to their disadvantage."

Had Captain Mordant been a vain man, the desire evinced by Miss O'Neill that her countrywomen should not be misjudged by him, and the displeasure she betrayed at the giddiness of her friend, might have struck him as originating in a peculiar desire to prove to him that she was too superior to the gene-

rality of Irishwomen to be capable of the errors she so severely reprehended in one of them. But he was *not* a vain man, and truly appreciated the motives of her conduct, which he felt quite persuaded sprang only from a purer sentiment.

The extreme delicacy of mind and decorum of manner of the Countess O'Neill had taught her grand-daughter to shrink with dismay from the somewhat coarse mirth, and desire of exciting it, so prominent a defect in many of her young countrywomen, and she would have felt as desirous to see them more dignified and refined, for their own sakes, as well as for hers. But, shocked herself by every proof of levity and want of maidenly reserve on their parts, her sense of propriety rendered her aware of the evil impression such follies were calculated to make on strangers;—hence, the lovely Grace O'Neill was somewhat disposed to fall into an opposite defect of manner, by becoming as formal as her companions were the reverse.

## CHAPTER X.

The following day a portion of the junior officers of the —— Regiment were invited to Ballymacross Castle, it being by no means the intention of Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald and his lady to confine their hospitality to the senior ones, while these last were engaged to the ball which was to follow in the evening, and the other half of the juniors were to dine with the Baronet the third day, their superior officers being again engaged for the third ball. Thus, three gala days, as the giver termed them, followed each other, a mode of displaying hospitality frequently adopted in Ireland. At each of these balls Miss O'Neill was alternately the partner of Captain Sydney Mordant and Mr. Herbert

Vernon, both alike smitten with her, but with very unequal chances of winning her affection, her preference being wholly accorded to the former, although she as yet knew not how deep was the impression made on her heart.

Never had that young and innocent breast previously harboured so dangerous a guest as love; consequently, she was not aware of the extent of his power until, on taking leave of her at the conclusion of the third ball at Ballymacross Castle, Captain Mordant, with an involuntary sigh, remarked to her that "the last three evenings had been the happiest of his life, but would render future solitary ones more insupportable," when a pang at her heart told her that she too would find her quiet evenings at home less happy than previous ones.

"How much I should like to have the honour of being presented to the Countess O'Neill!" said Mordant; "may I, Miss O'Neill, entreat that favour from you?"

Grace blushed and faltered as she promised to ask permission from her grandmother, but

added that she so seldom formed any new acquaintance, that she hardly hoped an exception to the rule of seclusion made by her grandmother, would now be accorded.

"But may I call at your door?" inquired Mordant.

Another blush, and a gentle assent, sent Mordant back to his quarters more in love, yet less unhappy, than before.

"Was there ever a more beautiful creature than Miss O'Neill?" demanded Herbert Vernon, as he and Mordant drove away from Ballymacross Castle after the last ball.

"Never," was the sole reply.

"I feel over head and ears in love with her, Mordant, but cannot flatter myself into a belief that my suit would ever prove successful, however warmly urged. Yet, when I think to what a comparatively brilliant destiny I could elevate her by making her my wife, and transporting her from this wild and comfortless country to the stately home and abundant luxuries in which it abounds, which will one day be mine, a latent hope springs up in my breast that she may be in-

duced to accord to my position and prospects that which no stretch of my vanity could lead me to think she would concede to myself. Before I had seen Miss O'Neill, had any one told me I could ever bring myself to sue for the hand of a woman who loved me not, and who only accepted me for my prospects, I should have pronounced such a supposition not only an insult but an impossibility; nevertheless, such is the revolution produced by an all-engrossing passion, that pride, self-respect, all, all yield to its influence; and I am weak—mean enough, to be ready to accept with joy the hand of her whose heart I fear I may never be able to touch."

Herbert Vernon hid his face with his hands, while his deep sighs revealed the extent of his emotion.

"This passion is of so recent a date, you know so little of her who has excited it, that a little reflection, and an avoidance of Miss O'Neill's society, may enable you to conquer it, my dear Vernon."

"And can you, Mordant, imagine that she

is one of those women who, once loved, can be so easily forgotten?"

Mordant's heart prompted a ready reply, but he forbore to utter it, for it would have entirely coincided with the sentiments of his friend; so he affected to make light of the subject, and said, "You know the lines, Vernon—

'None without hope e'er loved the brightest fair.'"

"Yes," replied Vernon, interrupting him, "and the next line, which applies to me—

'For love will hope where reason would despair.'

Yes, such is precisely my state. The reserve and coldness of Miss O'Neill convince my reason that I have no cause for hope, yet the syren still cheats me."

"But this is not your first passion, Vernon: and, as a former one has subsided, may not this also fade away when no food is given for its maintenance?"

"This, though not the first, is, I feel, the only real passion I ever knew. It is as different from the former one as the object

that has created it is superior. Oh! Mordant, if she showed only half the pleasure when I approach her that she evinces when you do I should be the happiest man alive!"

"Surely you are mistaken, Vernon. I assure you I have never had the slightest reason to think that I have found more favour in her eyes than you have."

"And I, fool as I am, have let you into the secret! Have I not seen her blush whenever you drew near her?"

"Miss O'Neill is only lately introduced even into the narrow circle here, which its inhabitants designate the world, or, more properly speaking, society. She is naturally shy and prone to blush, as is generally the case with persons of her age and sex, who have never mingled in more extended circles."

"So I might suppose if she blushed when other men approach her, Mordant; but I have watched her narrowly, and never have I seen the least suffusion of her cheek, except when your presence, or the mention of your name, produced it."

How rapidly throbbed the heart of Mordant, and how delicious were the sensations he experienced, as another confirmed the belief *he* had previously hardly dared to indulge, lest vanity might have misled him! He could have embraced Vernon, so transported was he by his words; but the recollection of his own dependent position, and the conviction that never would Lord and Lady Fitzmordant consent to his marrying the object of his attachment, damped his transitory happiness.

"Perhaps, Mordant, if you were to plead my suit with Miss O'Neill, and let her know what my prospects are, the certainty that my father and mother would receive her on whom the happiness of their only son depended with open arms, and tell her all the good you know of me, she might be disposed to listen to my proposal?"

"But might not a compliance with your desire, Vernon, expose me to the danger of forming an attachment which, in my peculiar position, must be a hopeless one? Miss O'Neill is not, I confess, a person with whom

any man with a disengaged heart could come in frequent contact with impunity."

"You feel, you admit this, Mordant. Ah! yes, I was right in my supposition when I guessed that you are already, perhaps unconsciously, smitten with her who has captivated me."

"I will be frank with you, Vernon. I am not indifferent to the charms of Miss O'Neill; nay more, I never felt so lively an interest in any woman before; but, as I never can hope to call her mine, I am not so selfish as to wish to entangle her affection, or to prevent her from listening to your suit; believing, as I firmly do, that with an honourable, kind-hearted, and good-tempered fellow like yourself, she would have a very fair chance of happiness."

"My dear Mordant, I can never forget your conduct on this occasion," said Herbert Vernon, clasping the hand of his friend. "Judge, then, how strong is the affection which would lead me to seek the possession of her hand, even though assured that with it she could not bestow her heart. This is

being selfish—mean—whatever you like to designate it; but, knowing that I would devote my life to making her happy, that my father and mother would act as the tenderest parents to her, that my friends and connections would become hers, I cannot but hope that I might in the end acquire the affection I would give worlds to possess."

"But are you not premature, Vernon, in declaring your attachment? Consider you have known Miss O'Neill little more than two or three weeks, and out of three weeks have spent only four evenings in her society, and those in crowded balls."

"Mordant, your blood is colder than mine, if you can think that it requires a longer time than four evenings for a creature so lovely in person and admirable in mind as Miss O'Neill to captivate a heart like mine."

Mordant felt his own heart too profoundly touched to deny the truth of the assertion of his friend, and, when the carriage stopped at the barracks, and they separated, he heartily wished that Vernon had not made him his confidant, nor asked him to plead his cause

with Miss O'Neill; for, as a man of honour, he felt bound to serve his interest, however painful to his own feelings. Men are so often the dupes of their own hearts, that who shall say that, in accepting the trust imposed on Mordant by his friend Vernon, he was not unconsciously influenced by the desire of facilitating occasions of interview with the secret object of his own affection, which might furnish opportunities of becoming better acquainted with her?

Reason sometimes warns mortals that certain results are likely to spring from certain causes, and they, admitting it, form resolutions not to let such results occur, believing that they can always avert them. Nevertheless they do not adopt the wise course of avoiding the cause of the effect they dread; namely, of shunning the object with whom they know their peace might be in danger; and, determined not to risk her happiness and their own by an ill-assorted marriage, they fearlessly rush into danger by interviews which feed the flame of affection, until it becomes torture to separate from her they

love, and they end by the marriage, which, at the commencement of their passion, they determined on never forming. Well may this weak conduct be compared to the infatuation of flies, who hover around a flame, which first singes their wings without teaching them to avoid it, and ends by their total destruction.

Mordant was kept awake for some time by certain qualms of conscience, as to the propriety of his own conduct. Was it right for him to seek opportunities of becoming better acquainted with the qualities of a creature so irresistibly charming, that even on so short an acquaintance with her, he felt that his heart was no longer free, certain as he must be that the more he knew her the stronger must his attachment prove? But as he believed the danger would be confined solely to him, that there would be no risk to her (for the part he had undertaken of pleading, the suit of another must lead her to think that he had no views for himself,) the desire of seeing her blinded him to the possible or probable consequences, and silenced his scru-

ples. There would be, as he said to himself, always time to withdraw from her presence when he should find he could no longer master his feelings; and with this vain belief he at length sank into slumber, to dream of her who occupied all his thoughts.

Had Mordant been a vain man, it might have occurred to him that the peace of the beautiful Grace O'Neill might be endangered by frequent interviews with him; and he was so honourably disposed, that such a possibility would have prevented him from seeking them; but he was really so free from vanity, the besetting sin of the generality of young men, that it never did occur to him; hence he believed that he risked only his own peace when he sought to become better acquainted with her.

The following morning, at breakfast in the mess-room, the hospitality of Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald and the balls of the preceding three nights, furnished the universal topic of conversation.

"There were, I admit," said Colonel Maitland, "a number of very pretty girls

present; but Miss O'Neill is, in my opinion, so infinitely superior to them all, that she totally eclipsed them. Her manner, too, is so distinguished, so perfectly lady-like, that I could do nothing but admire and wonder how in this wild country she could have acquired such ease and elegance."

Herbert Vernon looked triumphantly across the table at Mordant, and, encouraged by his colonel's praises of Miss O'Neill, mentally applauded himself for having selected her as the object of his affection.

"For my part," observed Mr. Hunter, "I think Miss O'Flaherty quite equal to her, though in another style."

"Yes, a very different style, I grant," remarked Lieutenant Marston; "Miss O'Neill resembles a fine Arabian horse, and Miss O'Flaherty a capital hackney."

"But how comes it, Hunter, that Miss O'Flaherty has found such favour in your sight of late? The other day you spoke slightingly of her."

"I didn't know her then," replied Mr. Hunter, "but, now that I do, I think her

one of the most agreeable girls I ever met."

"I confess that I think all the Irish young ladies we have seen remarkably handsome, and, although, not quite as polished as our English ones, far more pleasant and piquant," said Captain Sitwell.

"Their freedom of manner somewhat shocks one at first," observed Major Elvaston. "We Englishmen are not accustomed to have young ladies shake hands and welcome us as cordially on the second interview as if we were old and privileged friends; but this freedom extends no further, and I have a strong notion that any one presuming on it to take the slightest liberty, would find himself severely reproved."

"Or laughed at, which would be, perhaps, the more mortifying check of the two," said Captain Sitwell.

"The characteristic features in the manners of Irishwomen, seem to me to be little changed since Lord Chesterfield, when Viceroy of Ireland, pronounced his opinion of them," observed Colonel Maitland. "His

lordship, than whom there were few better judges of women, said that the Irishwomen looked less correct than English ones, but were in reality more so."

"Although I will not admit that any women can be superior to those of our own country," remarked Captain Sitwell, "I nevertheless am attracted by the artless gaiety, the buoyant spirits, and unceremonious cordiality of greeting of the Irish ladies, who, unconscious of evil in others, because they are conscious of none in themselves, like frank and lively children, are ready to amuse and be amused with others."

"I agree with you," said Mordant, "and believe that the ill-natured comments sometimes called forth by the natural vivacity of Irishwomen wholly originate in the ignorance of those who utter them."

"With every inclination to judge fairly of the ladies of this side of the water, I confess," remarked Colonel Maitland, "that I would prefer to see them resemble Miss O'Neill a little more, who, free from the

formal and conventional reserve of our Englishwomen, is equally so from the too vivacious and demonstrative freedom of the Irish."

## CHAPTER XI.

"And so, darling, you enjoyed your three days at Ballymacross Castle?" said the Countess O'Neill to her grand-daughter as they sat together at tea the evening of the return of the latter from her visit to that place.

"Yes, dearest grandmother; and I should have enjoyed them much more did I not remember how much you would miss me, and that my pleasure was purchased at the expense of your comfort."

"Why, I must confess, Grace, that poor Mrs. O'Flaherty is not precisely the person to fill your place, or make me forget your absence. Nevertheless, I got over the three days tolerably well, for the hours, whether

agreeably or disagreeably passed, still fleet on; for, alas! there is no casting anchor in the stream of time."

"I feared poor Mrs. O'Flaherty would *ennuyer* you. She sometimes has that effect on me, she is so childish."

"I have been endeavouring to reason with her on the folly of encouraging Honor in her wild spirits and reckless habit of bantering, which must present a great obstacle to her being happily settled for life, this last point being, as I was well aware, the only one likely to make an impression on her. To dwell on the impropriety of Honor's doings and sayings in any graver light than their injurious effect on her matrimonial chances would have been utterly unavailing But her poor, weak-minded mother assured me that she relied wholly on the very points in her manner to which I objected for her achieving conquests, and would not on any account check or change her. She quoted to me, as examples illustrative of the truth of her theory, the good marriages formed by all the wild and giddy girls of our acquaint-

ance, and the failure of the grave and steady ones in securing husbands.

"'You have heard,' said she, 'the old saying, that there is a God who watches over the safety of drunken men. So, I am persuaded, there is a Providence for wild girls; and, as I have instilled into Honor's mind that her first consideration in life must be to get a husband, you will find that, either by bantering or quizzing in her own wild way, she will carry her point when people least imagine it probable.' It was in vain that I tried to make her sensible of the evil of thus training her daughter to become a husband-hunter, and of its debasing effects on her mind. I could produce no good by my representations; and I really pity the poor girl, who finds in her own mother the worst adviser she could have. But you have told me none of the particulars of your balls. Who did you dance with?"

"Captain Mordant and Mr. Vernon."

"The same gentlemen, if I remember rightly, with whom you danced at the ball here?"

"Yes."

"Are they agreeable and sensible men?"

The Countess turned her eyes towards the face of her grand-daughter, and was surprised to see it suffused with a bright blush, while the artless girl seemed at a loss to frame a reply to so simple a question.

"Mr. Vernon," at length, said Grace, "is very gentlemanlike."

"And Captain Mordant, is he less agreeable than you thought him on the first night of your acquaintance?"

"Oh! no, he is even more so;" and a a deeper blush followed the former.

"Then you prefer him to Mr. Vernon, is it not so?"

"I hardly know; that is, perhaps he is the more agreeable of the two; but really, dearest grandmother, on so short an acquaintance it is not easy to pronounce."

The Countess O'Neill felt certain that Captain Mordant had made some impression on the heart of her grand-daughter. Her blushes, her hesitation, convinced her of it; and an involuntary sigh broke from the breast

of the fond and anxious parent at the discovery that her darling Grace could no longer, as hitherto, expose every thought of her pure mind to her. She now almost wished that she had not let her go to Ballymacross Castle, to be again exposed to the attentions of Captain Mordant.

"And yet," reasoned the admirable woman, "it is the destiny of the young and fair to win affection, and to respond to it. Who is there here among the young men of my neighbourhood to whom I could wish to see the happiness of this dear girl confided? Or who could appreciate her as she merits to be appreciated? I must see this Captain Mordant; must study his character, and judge whether he is worthy of the affections of my treasure. And yet may I not confide in the delicacy of her taste, the purity of her mind, and that intuitive sense of what is estimable, which have always characterized my child, for taking for granted that no man but one of superior qualities and attainments could make an impression on her?"

While these reflections were passing in

the mind of the Countess O'Neill, Grace bent over a drawing she was making, occasionally lifting her eyes to the face of her grandmother with a mingled expression of curiosity and timidity. How should she ever, without betraying a timidity that might reveal her emotion, repeat the request of Captain Mordant to be permitted to pay his respects to her grandmother? How foolish it was of her not to have mentioned the request when her grandmother had inquired about him! That was the moment to do so, and she had allowed it to pass; and he would be sure to call the next day, she felt certain he would, and her grandmother would think it odd, and he, too, must think it very strange, that he was not admitted; and yet how could he be let in if she did not ask permission of her grandmother? Yes, *he* would be sent from the door, would probably feel mortified; and all this would be her fault. How could she be so foolish, so nervous? She never was so before; and what could be more simple than repeating his request? She cleared her throat two or three times to speak to her

grandmother, but a sense of suffocation prevented her from speaking.

"Have you caught cold, darling?" inquired the Countess, somewhat alarmed.

"No, dearest grandmother, only a slight huskiness in the throat, which is now quite gone."

"I was thinking, dearest, that, though I do not like seeing strangers, I should be glad to receive a visit from your two partners."

"Which reminds me," said Grace, blushing up to her very temples, "that Captain Mordant asked me to obtain your permission to receive him."

"I must give instructions to Patrick to admit him, my darling, so ring the bell;" a command which Grace obeyed with alacrity.

The Countess insisted on her granddaughter going to bed unusually early that night, to make up for the fatigue of the three preceding ones; and we do not exaggerate when we assert that the mind of the old lady was almost as much occupied by Captain Mordant, whom she had never seen, as was

that of Grace herself, to whom his image was perpetually present. How sweet were the dreams of the lovely girl that night!

She seemed to listen to the tones of that musical, yet manly voice, as it breathed vows of love in her enraptured ear, and vowed eternal constancy. She walked with him in beautiful gardens, by murmuring fountains; and he told her that he now loved for the first time, and entreated a return of his passion. She essayed to speak, but could not, and he accused her of cruelty, when, placing her hand in his, she felt him cover it with kisses; and she awoke to find it fondly pressed by her grandmother, who was bending over her couch.

"I came to see how you slept, darling," said the Countess, "and when I approached you put forth your hand to meet mine, and seemed so happy that for a moment I believed you were awake; but when I looked more closely I saw that you still slept."

For the first time in her life Grace reflected some minutes on what dress she should wear that day. She first decided on

putting on her best and most becoming morning dress; but then came the thought that her grandmother might think it strange that she wore it, and attribute it to the true cause, the wish of appearing to advantage in the eyes of Captain Mordant. No; she would wear a dark silk dress. It is true her grandmother often told her she looked best in light colours, and therefore she was tempted on this occasion to attire herself in a robe of grey poplin. But no; on reflection she would wear a dark gown, with white collar and cuffs; that would look less pretending, and lead to no suspicion of her wishing to appear to more than usual advantage that day.

The dark robe was put on, and well it fitted the exquisitely-formed bust and slender waist of its beautiful wearer. The snowy whiteness of the collar and cuffs was peculiarly becoming to the fine complexion of Grace; and the small feet and delicate hands peeping forth from the dark robe would have proved to the most prejudiced Englishman that ever touched the Hibernian shore, that

an Irishwoman might have as small feet and hands as the most aristocratic dame that England had ever given birth to.

Never previously had Grace looked so frequently in her mirror as on this morning, and never had she been less satisfied with the image it reflected. Never vain, she was on this occasion so much the reverse that she really persuaded herself into a belief that she was rather plain than good-looking: a fact so extraordinary that we fear few of our female readers will give credence to it, but which was, nevertheless, perfectly true. At three o'clock, a knock at the hall-door announced a visitor, and in a minute after the sound of ascending steps was heard.

Grace half rose with the intention of looking in the glass, but, recollecting herself, sat down again; and a bright blush overspread her cheeks, whether from a latent dread that her grandmother might have suspected the motive of her half leaving her seat, or from pleasure at the visit she was about to receive, we are not prepared to decide. The door of the drawing-room thrown open by Patrick,

Captain Mordant entered, while his name was pronounced, and Grace presented him to her grandmother, with certain irrepressible indications of perturbation which she would have given much to conceal.

The fine figure, handsome and intelligent face, and, above all, the air *distingué* of Mordant, made a most favourable impression on the Countess O'Neill; while the suavity of his manner, and the deferential tone he adopted towards her, soon banished the constraint and ceremony which generally attend a first visit between total strangers. The conversation was chiefly maintained by the Countess and Mordant, who were mutually pleased with each other, Grace only occasionally joining in it; and when, after a visit of an hour, Mordant arose to depart, entreating permission to renew the privilege of calling sometimes, and of presenting his friend Mr. Vernon, Grace thought that half an hour instead of a whole one could not have elapsed.

"But why should he wish to present Mr. Vernon?" thought Grace. "I wish he

had not asked grandmamma, for now Mr. Vernon will always be sure to accompany him when he comes here, and his presence will spoil all the pleasure of Captain Mordant's visits, at least to me."

It was Sterne who said that "a man has seldom an intention of making a woman an offer of kindness without her having a presentiment of it some moments before." This female instinct, young and inexperienced as Grace was, had led her to form a notion that Mr. Vernon regarded her with a more than ordinary interest. But so little of a coquette was she that, far from this suspicion affording her any pleasure, it really was disagreeable to her, and she would gladly have avoided giving Mr. Vernon any opportunity of resuming his attentions. Now, however, the Countess O'Neill having accorded her permission to receive him, Grace felt certain that he would avail himself of it much more frequently than would be acceptable to her, and determined to discourage him as much as was consistent with good breeding.

"What a remarkably gentlemanlike man

Captain Mordant is!" remarked the Countess. "He is very good-looking, too, and, unlike the generality of his sex, does not appear to be too well aware of this fact. A vain woman is bad enough, but a vain man is still worse. You expressed yourself so coldly about Captain Mordant's personal advantages that I was not prepared to see so handsome a man."

Grace had lately fallen into such a habit of blushing that her grandmother, who had observed it, was not very much surprised at seeing her fair cheeks glow with a bright but evanescent hue when she addressed this remark to her, and was almost tempted to smile when, in reply to her observations, Grace uttered something about the difference of opinion often entertained about good looks.

"You surely don't mean to say that you consider Captain Mordant otherwise than handsome, darling?" said the Countess, amused by the disingenuousness of her grand-daughter, prompted by an incipient affection and maidenly shyness. Her own

experience of the feelings peculiar to a first attachment had taught her to comprehend those of Grace. She well remembered that, although naturally of a most frank and open disposition, and fondly devoted to her own mother, how disposed she was to conceal from that dear parent the state of her heart until the demand for her hand from Count O'Neill justified the preference she had conceived for him, and truly sympathized with Grace on the present occasion. Nevertheless, she was not indisposed to indulge a momentary *espièglerie* at her expense, certain that it would not be long ere Grace would confide to her maternal breast the only secret of her heart.

"Am I, then, to understand that in this instance, Grace, your taste and mine do not agree?" inquired the Countess O'Neill.

"No, dearest grandmother—that is to say, yes;" and the lovely girl blushed to her very eyes. "I think Captain Mordant very good-looking; but, as I am not much of a judge of good looks, at least in men, I did

not know whether you might think him so; and so"——

"And so, darling," said the Countess O'Neill, interrupting her, "you were afraid of compromising your good taste by declaring your opinion. In this case, however, it was safe, for none could deny the personal attractions of Captain Mordant." And then, changing the subject to an indifferent one, the Countess relieved her sensitive granddaughter from the embarrassment under which she was labouring, leaving her happy in the belief that her secret preference for Captain Mordant was unsuspected, while to the Countess O'Neill, it was as fully revealed as if Grace had confessed it. "Poor dear child," thought she, "I must not attempt to gain her confidence on this point until her delicacy is relieved by an avowal of his affection. Then, I am sure, she will open her heart to me."

## CHAPTER XII.

If Mordant was deeply smitten by the beauty, unaffected modesty, and charm of manner of Grace O'Neill when seen, as hitherto, only in the blaze of a brilliantly-illuminated ball-room—a light so favourable to female beauty that, even after its first freshness has somewhat faded, it seems to recover its pristine bloom—how much more did he admire her when he beheld her in the bright sunshine of a clear and cheerful day, that true test of youth and beauty, which leaves not the slightest defect concealed, while it brings out the charm of a fine complexion? She struck him as being even more lovely than he had previously thought her, and, notwithstanding his resolution not

yield up his heart, he was more in love with her than ever.

The extreme neatness of the house in which she resided, the simple elegance that reigned throughout the room in which he had been received, vouching for the intellectual and feminine occupations of its inhabitants, was in perfect harmony with their appearance. Books, flowers, a pianoforte, a frame on which a piece of embroidery was strained, and half finished, from a beautiful drawing placed on an easel near it, formed a little picture to which the elderly and youthful lady gave the finishing touches and animation.

Never did age appear more venerable or more respectable than in the Countess O'Neill. Tall and slight, with finely-formed features and a delicate fairness of skin, a strong resemblance existed between her grand-daughter and her. Attired in black silk with a white crape collar and cuffs, and a widow's cap, which had never been abandoned since the death of her husband, she wore her silvery hair, of which she had a

profusion, separated, à la Madonna, on her forehead. Those rich tresses, which sorrow had rendered prematurely grey, had once been as black as those of her grand-daughter, but no attempt to conceal this mark of age had ever been made; and, as Mordant contemplated her countenance, he thought those snowy braids lent a peculiarly touching character to her pale but fair face.

Reclined in an ebony easy-chair, with dark velvet cushions, a small table, on which was placed her Bible, close to her, Mordant thought her the most interesting-looking woman he had ever beheld, and just such a one as Vandyke would have liked to paint. Her small and finely-shaped hands resting on her black dress reminded him forcibly of a charming picture by Vandyke of one of his female ancestors, who, like the Countess O'Neill, had never changed her widow's dress for any other. This portrait he had often admired in the stately gallery of his father, and, now that the original seemed to stand before him, he felt that the appearance of the grandmother of Miss O'Neill, even in

the most fastidious and courtly circles, must command respect. Who that looked on this venerable woman, whose beauty Time had touched and mellowed without defacing, and then glanced on the lovely creature in the bloom of youth and beauty near her, but must have felt assured that, when years had dimmed the lustre of her charms, she would grow into the perfect likeness of her grandmother, only changing one character of beauty for another?

Mordant thought of women of a certain age in high life in England, to whom Time, in proportion as he took away their comeliness, bestowed increase of embonpoint until they wished their "too too solid flesh would melt," and who with tresses only become their own by right of purchase, and, "by using all other appliances to boot," vainly endeavour to repair or conceal the ravages of the inexorable tyrant, looked such vile caricatures of human beings as had often made him turn with distaste from some plump young beauty, a daughter or granddaughter of these moving masses of flesh, in

whose pretty faces might be traced a resemblance to the puffed ones of their mammas or grandmammas, shuddering at the thought that such might these Hebes hereafter become. But the lover of Grace O'Neill who could aspire to her hand might anticipate the effect of Time on her without distaste or dread, when he looked on the face and figure of her grandmother.

It had struck Mordant more than once that Miss O'Neill had not the slightest portion of the Irish accent, and he found that the Countess was equally exempt from this national peculiarity, while almost all the persons in Ireland with whom he had associated hitherto possessed it in a very striking degree. Their utter freedom from the accent of their country greatly gratified him, for it seemed to his fastidious taste that any touch of it would have impaired the refinement and elegance which he considered so indispensable in women. When he left their house, he encountered Mrs. and Miss O'Flaherty, who were approaching it.

"Give me leave, Captain Mordant," said

the latter, "to introduce you to my mother."

The old lady, with a very strong Hibernian accent, declared she was "mighty pleased to become acquainted with the Captain, and hoped he would sometimes look in and pay her a visit; though she led a very lonely life, and would be moped to death only for the constant good spirits of Honor. Good spirits were, indeed, a great blessing; but, for her part, *she* could not be expected to have them, after having lost a husband," and here she drew out a cambrick handkerchief and applied it to her eyes, "for whose loss she never could be consoled."

"That will do, mother," interrupted Honor. "Don't bother Captain Mordant about a loss that happened so long ago, and which, after all, if what you have told me be true, was no loss at all."

"Honor! Honor! what can yon be thinking of, to speak so disrespectfully of your own father, who is now in Heaven? Don't mind her, Captain; she is a wild, giddy girl, that doesn't know what she is saying half her time."

"There's a pretty character to give a poor girl! Isn't it?" said Honor, with a comic expression of countenance. "It's easy to see, mother, that you don't want to get me married off your hands, when you tell all my faults to the first stranger you meet in the street. But Captain Mordant is a good creature—are you not?" smiling at him, "and won't let out a word of all this to any of the marrying men in his regiment, and in return I'll put in a good word for him whenever it is required."

"Will you hold your tongue, you madcap? Sure there's no keeping you quiet," observed Mrs. O'Flaherty; but, though her words were meant to reprove her giddy daughter, her eyes were turned to her with an expression of pride and complacency that betrayed her admiration of her.

"My mother will be very glad to offer you a cup of tea and a bit of hot slim cake any evening that you have nothing better to do with yourself. Won't you, mother? And, if you bring a certain young officer with you, the first letter of whose name is Hunter, I will engage to make you laugh."

"How often have I told you, Honor, that I can't bear your humbugging young men as you do?"

"Would you rather that they should humbug me, mother? Because, if that's the case, I'll be as innocent as a lamb, and believe everything they tell me."

"Was there ever such a girl in this world! Sure what I want is not to have any humbugging at either side. When I was young, no genteel or well-brought-up girl would attempt to quiz, or humbug. It would be considered very wrong. But you take after your poor father who is now in Heaven, and who was everlastingly quizzing and hoaxing every one he met with. Sure even I, his own lawful wife, he never could let alone; but used to bother me by making me believe black was white, and laughing at me after. God forgive him!" And Mrs. O'Flaherty again drew forth her handkerchief and applied it to her eyes.

"God knows, mother, there's no pleasing you any way," said Honor, archly. "You are crying now because you hav'n't my poor

father to humbug and make game of you, yet when I try to follow his good example you complain."

"Well, well, it's of no manner of use reasoning with you, Honor; but don't let us keep the Captain standing in the street. Good morning, sir. I'm mighty proud to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and if poor Mr. O'Flaherty, God rest his soul, was now alive, he'd be very proud to invite you to dinner, for he was very fond of company," and the speaker's handkerchief was once more applied to her eyes. But he's in Heaven."

"Where I'm afraid he can't have the pleasure of the Captain's company," added Honor demurely, as she and her mother walked away.

"How can Miss O'Neill, with her refinement and delicacy, be so partial to that wild, coarse-minded girl?" thought Mordant. "It really is disgusting to see that she cannot spare even her own mother, who, however ridiculous she may be, ought to be respectable in the eyes of her daughter. Then to

hear how she utters pleasantries on subjects that should ever be sacred! I wish Miss O'Neill saw less of her, for Miss O'Flaherty seems always out of her place when she is in the society of one so immeasurably her superior."

While Mordant was thus soliloquizing, he encountered Herbert Vernon, who, too impatient to await his return to the barrack, had come forth to meet him.

"How long you have stayed, Mordant!" said he. "I began to think you would remain all day at the Countess O'Neill's, and feared you thought more of gratifying your own feelings than of consulting mine during this visitation."

"You wrong me, Vernon. I *did* think of you, and have obtained permission to present you to the Countess O'Neill."

"But did it require such a prolonged visit to effect this?"

Mordant saw that his friend was piqued, and, feeling that in a similar case he, too, might have been impatient, related to him the interview with Mrs. and Miss O'Flaherty

which had occasioned his delay in returning to the barrack.

"Strange to say," observed Vernon, "I left that foolish fellow, Hunter, declaiming on the charms of this same Miss O'Flaherty, who has certainly succeeded in making a deep impression on his vanity, if not on his heart."

"An appeal to a man's vanity is often the shortest and surest road to his heart," replied Mordant; "but, foolish as Hunter is, I don't think he can be caught by this wild girl. Only fancy his bringing such a wife to Wintern Abbey. What a blow it would be to the *millionaire* and his wife; and what a fertile field for her favourite amusement of quizzing the retired manufacturer and his spouse would it furnish their hopeful Hibernian daughter-in-law!"

"But you have told me nothing of the lovely Miss O'Neill and her grandmother, Mordant. Do tell me every particular. Is their home *very* Irish? And is the old lady what one is prone to imagine an old-fashioned Irish lady must be?"

"Quite the reverse of the caricatures which are brought forward on the stage in England, and which we English take for granted must be faithful pictures of Irish life."

"And to which, if I may credit what I have heard, some striking resemblance may still be found. Mrs. O'Flaherty, *par exemple*."

"Yes, I must confess Mrs. O'Flaherty is very Irish and very absurd. The Countess O'Neill is one of the most distinguished women in appearance, and the most ladylike in manner, I ever saw anywhere; and, like her fair grand-daughter, has not the slightest accent of her country."

"*Tant mieux, tant mieux*, my dear fellow; for one would not like to have to blush for one's wife's family. But Grace, who may truly be said to be a fourth Grace if not a tenth Muse, how does she bear daylight and sunshine,—I mean, how does she look of a morning? So many women who appear young and beautiful as Houris in a well-lighted ball-room look like faded flowers

the following morning at breakfast; and, as I hold it an essential advantage in wedded life to have my wife preside at the matinal repast, I should like her not to appear less fresh and white than the delicate roll which is to tempt my appetite. A very homely comparison, you will say."

"You can judge for yourself to-morrow, Vernon, for I will present you, and you will then concur in opinion with me that a fairer, fresher face never confronted the light of day than Miss O'Neill's."

"O! Mordant, how happy should I be could I but hope to call this lovely creature mine! Heigh-ho! How little did I think when we marched into this dull town that I should ever contemplate marrying one of its fair denizens! I would have wagered hundreds against the possibility of such an event, yet here am I now so far gone in love that the bare thought of becoming an unsuccessful suitor fills me with fear."

"Are you quite sure that you do not exaggerate your feelings, Vernon?"

"What a question! But what puts such a notion into your head?"

"Your anxiety about Miss O'Neill's appearance by daylight, and her grandmother's claims to distinction. A man deeply in love would not, according to my notions, attach such importance to these points."

"You don't mean to say, Mordant, that if you found the lovely nymph you beheld at a ball, a mere mortal, faded and unhealthy by daylight, or even worse, coarse and red-faced, that your passion would know no diminution?"

"My admiration might decrease, but not my passion, if I had, indeed, formed one."

"Mine, too, would, I am sure, resist such a trial of its force; nevertheless, I confess that I am not sorry to be spared it; for the beautiful Grace has so often been present to my imagination, seated at my breakfast-table, attired in a snowy *dishabille*, her shining raven tresses braided around her classically-shaped head, her milk-white throat encircled by delicate lace, which in my eyes enhances the charms it shades, her small white and dimpled hand pouring out my tea, while her fairy-like foot, in its Cinderella-

sized slipper, rests on a *tabouret*, and peeps forth from the soft white drapery which falls around it, that she is more identified, in my mind, with this picture than with any other my fancy can form."

A deep sigh from Mordant was the only comment made.

## CHAPTER XIII.

The officers of the —— Regiment found themselves engaged in a round of dinners, which, if they wanted the refinement and elegance peculiar to those given in England, abounded in viands of the best quality, and wines rarely to be met with even in the most aristocratic circles of their native land; and, above all, crowned by a warmth of welcome which even the most fastidious agreed in thinking was more exhilarating to the spirits of the guests than the coldness and reserve which characterize dinners given in country quarters in England. To be sure the dinner-tables were crowded not only by the visitors assembled around them, but by the quantity of good things literally heaped

upon them; for, according to Irish hospitality, that virtue in which few, if any, of its inhabitants are deficient, there cannot be too many pleasant persons around the board, nor too many good things set on it.

Often was recourse compelled to be had to side-tables, for the supernumerary guests sure to assemble on occasions where the host and hostess, "on hospitable thoughts intent," seldom failed to extend invitations to some six or eight persons more than their largest dinner-table could accommodate, on the alleged plea that *all* who were asked might not come. Some one might be called away, others might be indisposed, and a death or marriage among the relations might prevent others from being present.

Thus, on the contingency that some three or four of the invited guests *might* not be able to come, as many more were engaged to fill their places; and not to extend hospitality to any chance visitor who might unexpectedly arrive at the houses of the families first invited was a proceeding so wholly out of the question as never to be thought of.

Hence two, and even three side-tables were not uncommon at dinner parties, where the perfect consciousness that, however numerous might be the guests, there would be ample food for all, prevented the hosts from feeling any uneasiness.

The gaiety and frequent explosions of mirth at these dinners, although they surprised the English portion of the company, accustomed to the reserve and somewhat formal gravity and decorum of English dinners, nevertheless produced a sympathetic cheerfulness in them; and, while they admitted that the Irish were a wonderfully sprightly people, these last declared that Englishmen only required to live a little with the Irish to become capital fellows, and admirers of good jokes.

Even the proud-looking young Irish fox-hunters and hare-hunters, whose *désinvaltura* style of sitting their horses when leaping over stone walls, wide ditches, and stiff fences that might have made even a Meltonian stare, became on friendly terms with the officers, whom they no longer suspected of a

disposition to quiz them, and good-naturedly offered to show them as much sport as their woods, fields, mountains, and rivers could afford; and the officers in return invited them to breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners at their mess. In short, in the course of a month or six weeks a frequent interchange of hospitalities, most freely given and as cordially received, had established a very friendly understanding between all parties; and sorry would both have been had the —— Regiment been removed from their present quarters. Often were the officers induced to smile as they perused the letters of their relatives from England, filled with expressions of pity and sympathy for "the poor exiles in Ireland," as they were termed.

Lady Fitzmordant was almost lachrymose when she wrote to her son, Mordant, on the hardships of his fate in that dreadful wild country, where he could have no society, or at least none worthy of him; and mentioned the fêtes lately given at Fitzmordant Castle, in honour of the presence of royalty, as a contrast to the uncivilized state of vegeta-

tion to which he, poor dear fellow! was condemned.

Lady Melborough hoped her dear son would not expose himself to the danger of colds in that damp climate, which the Dowager Lady Snowhill had told her had caused the loss of the use of his limbs to a relative of hers, who had merely passed a few hours up to his middle in a river there, fishing, on a very cold day; and Mrs. Hunter advised her son never to venture out after dark without a guard of soldiers, as she heard that all who were so foolhardy as to neglect this precaution were sure to be murdered by the wild Hirish. She added a strict injunction to avoid Hirish ladies, (if, indeed, there were any ladies in such a barbarous country,) for she remembered that an Hirish kitchenmaid, whom the housekeeper at Wintern Abbey had once been so foolish as to hire, had got tipsy and abused every one, which led her to conclude that all Irishwomen were prone to indulge in strong liquors, which was said to be the cause of their high spirits.

"I wish the old girl had not such a strong

prejudice against the Irish, or *Hirish*, as she terms them," muttered Hunter to himself, as he laid down the letter; "and also that she would not *aspirate*, or, as a fellow of my acquaintance one said, exasperate, her h's so much, or rather not put h's in where there ought to be none. What a confounded funk she and the old governor would be in if I were to marry Honor O'Flaherty! Their anger, however, would only be like a fire made of straw, hot for a short time,—and soon over. But I have not yet made up my mind to that, although it has occurred to me more than once; and, after all, I might do worse, for Honor's a devilish fine girl, full of fun and up to everything. What rare sport we should have, for she longs to gallop across the country, clearing hedges and ditches! What ridicule she would cast on our fellows who set up to quiz and hoax me! By Jove! she'd have the best of it, for I never saw a girl with such ready answers on every subject as she has. Well, if, after all, I *should* end by marrying her, which, if I find I cannot do without her, I will, I can tell the old

boy and girl at Wintern Abbey that if I haven't brought a fortune into the family I have brought an Honor. Hah, hah! not so bad a joke. That would make Honor herself laugh if I told it to her."

So great was the impatience of Mr. Herbert Vernon to be presented to the Countess O'Neill, that he called on his friend, Mordant, the following day two hours at least before the usual time for paying morning visits, and Mordant had some difficulty in preventing him from presenting himself at the door at one instead of half-past three o'clock, the time at which the Countess was generally visible. The emotion of Vernon as he took a seat by Grace was so ill-concealed that her grandmother soon perceived it, and noticed at the same time that Grace was by no means gratified by his attention. The perfect indifference she betrayed when he addressed her was so unlike the blushing timidity she evinced when Mordant spoke to her, that the Countess O'Neill became convinced that the suspicions she had previously formed of her grand-daughter's growing partiality for the latter were well founded.

This belief induced her to study more attentively the character and disposition of Mordant; and, as she conversed with him on various topics, she discovered, with pleasure, that the gentlemanly manners and good sense which in their first interview had won her favourable opinion were based on qualities which, even in conversation, revealed the high and moral cultivation of his mind. She observed that often did his glance turn to Grace with an expression of no common interest, while his conversation was addressed almost exclusively to herself. When Mordant arose to withdraw, his friend seemed disposed still to linger, as though he could not tear himself away from Grace; and, when he approached the Countess O'Neill, and solicited her permission to renew his visits, there were a trepidity and anxiety in his manner that denoted the deep importance he attached to obtaining this privilege, and the gratification he experienced at its being accorded to him.

"Mr. Herbert Vernon appears to be a very

gentlemanlike young man, and is very good looking," observed the Countess O'Neill.

"He does not strike me as being anything very remarkable, dearest grandmother," was the reply.

"I had no idea that my Grace was so fastidious! Compare Mr. Herbert Vernon with any, or, indeed all, the young men of our neighbourhood, and he must gain by the comparison."

"Perhaps so," answered Grace, carelessly.

"But," resumed the Countess, "as you have hitherto seen only the young men in our neighbourhood, over whom you admit this young Englishman has a superiority, how can you say that you think there is nothing very remarkable about him?"

Never did Grace regret the unaccountable propensity to blushing which had lately evinced itself so much as at this moment, when she *felt*, rather than saw, that her grandmother's eyes were fixed on her face; and felt, also, that her cheeks were glowing.

"Perhaps, dear grandmother," said she,

after a pause, "it is because I never rated the young men in our neighbourhood very highly, that, while admitting Mr. Herbert Vernon's superiority over them, I am not disposed to estimate his advantages as anything remarkable."

"I was right in my conjectures," thought the Countess O'Neill, and a deep sigh unconsciously followed the admission. "My precious child," thought the Countess, "your gentle and artless heart has received its first tender impression, an impression which, if I may judge by my own experience, will be indelible. Oh! may Heaven grant that he who has awakened affection in it may reciprocate the sentiment in all its force, and be free to claim that dear hand as its reward."

"How many solicitudes spring up in the maternal breast when a mother first discovers that her child loves! And am I not a mother? ay, and more than a mother, for all the tenderness I felt towards my sole child, the mother of my precious Grace, is added to the affection I feel for her, dear and endearing creature! But who, with a disen-

gaged heart, could see without admiring, could know without loving and esteeming her? She is not rich, it is true; nevertheless, she cannot be termed poor; and I have brought her up so free from expensive habits and tastes, that the fortune I can bequeath her, small as it might appear to a person accustomed to luxury, will be sufficient,—ay, amply sufficient,—to satisfy her wants, and prevent her being deemed portionless as the wife of a *cadet de famille*, though it might not be thought large enough to entitle her to wed the elder branch of a noble family. With such a man as Captain Mordant my child would, I am sure, be happy; for, short as our acquaintance has been, the impression he has made on me is so favourable to him, that I should be indeed greatly disappointed were I to discover anything to his disadvantage. There are some persons whom, even on a slight acquaintance, we are ready to pronounce to be worthy of our esteem, and this Englishman is of the number."

Such were the thoughts that occupied the

Countess O'Neill, as she sat reclining in a *bergère*, her eyes fixed on her grand-daughter, who had resumed her pencil, and who, unconscious that her grandmother was regarding her, was intent on the drawing she was sketching. A message from Mrs. O'Flaherty, to request the loan of a book, caused the Countess to send Grace for it to her chamber, and during her absence the Countess walked to the table, and glanced at the drawing, when, to her surprise, she beheld two or three sketches of the head of Mordant, so strikingly like as to leave no room to doubt for whom they were meant.

Never had the Countess previously seen any attempt at portraiture made by her grand-daughter, her drawing being confined to landscapes and flowers, in the representation of which she excelled; but here was the proof of a new talent; and, as the Countess O'Neill examined it, she felt convinced that deep indeed must be the impression made on her grandchild's heart when from memory alone she could so accurately portray the features and expression of one

known only so short a time. She returned to her seat when she heard the returning footsteps of Grace, reluctant that the sensitive girl should know that she had seen the sketches; and, when she saw her resume her task, and, when concluded, consign the paper into a portfolio, she was glad that Grace had not found her examining it, and not the less so as she remembered that hitherto all Grace's drawings were submitted to her inspection.

"Dear, dear girl! a change has already taken place in that youthful mind, and she is no longer quite at her ease with me. But this was to be expected; and I must not feel the decrease in her confidence as if it originated in a decrease of affection."

The seclusion in which the Countess O'Neill had lived since the death of her husband, and the constant contemplation of the exquisite but too brief happiness she had enjoyed from the moment of her union until that event, had kept alive the freshness of her feelings long after age might have been supposed to have chilled them.

This freshness of heart enabled her to enter into, and sympathize with, the emotions of her grand-daughter, and, as she compared them with those which she herself had formerly experienced, she read, as in an open book, all that was passing in the guileless heart of Grace, verifying the truth of the line, "He best can paint them who has felt them most," only substituting the word "imagine" for "paint." Little did Grace guess, when she surreptitiously removed the paper on which the drawings of Mordant were sketched from the sitting-room to her bedchamber, that she might gaze on the resemblances free from observation, that her grandmother had already seen them and recognised the likeness; much less did she expect that her secret feelings were divined by that fond heart.

## CHAPTER XIV.

The visits of Mr. Herbert Vernon to the Countess O'Neill became as frequent as was consistent with the respect which that lady knew so well how to inspire and maintain. He was fearful of presenting himself too often, lest it might not be agreeable to her; and, while he put this constraint on his feelings, believing that he was not passing the limit dictated by *les biensćances*, when he presented himself twice a week at the Countess's door, instead of every day, as his heart prompted, the Countess felt certain that a more than ordinary interest drew him to her house. Often did he turn his steps to her door, and involuntarily raise his hand to the knocker, when, recollecting that he had paid

a visit the previous day, he withdrew his hand, and walked away.

He was in the habit of frequently passing by the house, although not encouraged by the hope of beholding the magnet that drew him there in the window; for Miss O'Neill, unlike too many of her countrywomen living in a street, never looked out of windows, thinking that they were formed solely to admit light and air, while so many of her young female friends seemed to think that they were only meant to exhibit their fair faces to the passers by, and, to prevent the said passers by from suffering any disappointment, generally stationed themselves at the windows of their abodes while they pursued their usual avocations.

This habitude was peculiarly distasteful to the Countess O'Neill, who had early impressed her opinion on her grand-daughter; hence, not only did Grace carefully avoid the casements, but white muslin curtains so closely shaded them that not even a shadow of the occupants of the chambers could be revealed to any person in the streets. "Where can she walk?" would Mr. Herbert Vernon say to himself; "I never by any

happy chance meet her; yet, surely, she must go out for air and exercise, or she would not look so blooming. How I should like to know in what direction she walks!"

The gentleman was not aware that an extensive garden which appertained to the house of the Countess O'Neill, and which was surrounded by a high and close hedge of privet and boxwood, offering as impervious a screen as a wall of ten feet high would have done, enabled Grace to enjoy air and exercise in perfect privacy; and, here, too, her grandmother was rolled around in her garden-chair whenever the weather permitted.

"I find there are two very good parties in the —— Regiment," said Lady Fitzgerald during a morning visit which she paid to the Countess O'Neill. "One is Mr. Herbert Vernon, and the other is Mr. Hunter. Mr. Herbert Vernon is the only son of Lord Melborough, a very rich nobleman; and Mr. Hunter is also an only child to the modern Crœsus, who has amassed such an enormous fortune by the cotton manufacture, of no family to be sure, quite a *parvenu;* but few mind that now-a-days, when money is every-

thing. I had written to England to some friends of mine to learn every particular about the officers, and have received answers. Captain Mordant is only a second son, and his elder brother is married. My correspondent has not yet ascertained whether this brother has a son, for that, you know, would make a great difference in the case; but the other two officers would indeed make unexceptionable matches, and really these are not times to neglect any opportunity that offers of disposing of one's daughters to advantage."

"But don't you think, my dear lady Fitzgerald, that it is better to leave all these matters to chance?" observed the Countess O'Neill.

"To chance!" reiterated Lady Fitzgerald. "You would not say so if you spent every season in London as I do, and saw how mothers there exert themselves to procure matches for their daughters."

"I should not like a child of mine to owe a husband to any such exertions," was the reply.

"If all mothers were of your opinion, there would be fewer marriages every season, I

can assure you, for men now know their own value, and are very wary about being caught."

"Which is the inevitable result of the exertions you mention. Were men allowed to seek, instead of being sought, they would be more disposed to wed."

"I doubt it. They are so apathetic, so engrossed by their clubs, their horses, their pleasures, that they postpone all thoughts of marrying from year to year, thinking that it will always be time to marry when satiated with the enjoyments of which they are in possession. No, no; mothers now require no inconsiderable degree of address to bring about marriages for their daughters, however handsome the girls may be; and, as to plain girls, (and here the speaker sighed,) she must indeed be a Proteus in talent who can secure husbands for them."

"Were I in such a position," observed the Countess O'Neill, "I would not make the attempt; for what chance of happiness can a wife have whose husband has been manœuvred into marrying her?"

"Quite as much as if he had married her for love. In both cases, the results are the

same. The man who marries for love in a certain time becomes tired of his wife, and, as he married to please himself, neglects her for the same cause; while he who has been manœuvred, as you term it, into marrying, entertains so much less affection on entering his conjugal career, that a good understanding is more likely to be maintained through it. The pair expect less, and consequently are less disappointed."

"But surely no right-minded girl would marry a man whom she did not prefer to all others, and whom she did not believe preferred her?"

"Perhaps not, if she had a fortune. But what are poor girls with small portions, or, worse still, none, to do? Live as pensioners on an elder brother, whose wife, hardly tolerating their presence, makes them feel how distasteful it is to her; or live—or rather say, starve—on an income insufficient for any of the comforts of life—nay, for almost the necessaries."

"You have drawn a gloomy picture, and, for poor girls situated as you have described, I must admit that marriage becomes indispensable. Nevertheless, even to accomplish

this desired end, I am still of opinion that the less parents interfere to bring it about, the better is the chance of success, and the less likely is the husband to reproach his wife for the match into which he may have been entrapped."

"Entrapped, my dear Countess O'Neill, is a harsh term, and I don't think it applicable to the aids contributed by parents to marry off their daughters. Dinners, balls, water parties, pic-nics, and riding parties promoted by mothers, and which draw young people together, can hardly be stigmatized as traps."

The Countess O'Neill smiled, as was her wont, when she saw persons objecting to certain terms while pursuing the very line of conduct designated by them — persons who objected not to the thing but to the name.

"You smile, my dear friend," observed Lady Fitzgerald; "you may do so, for your grand-daughter is differently placed. She has great beauty and peculiar fascination of manner. You have, I doubt not, secured her an independence which exempts the necessity of husband-hunting, while my girls

with but a few paltry thousands—three at the outside—all the estates being entailed on their brother, will become little less than paupers after the death of their parents, should they not find husbands. In our neighbourhood we have no marrying men; or, at least, none who would marry girls without fortunes. Not that our countrymen are more selfish or avaricious than Englishmen; *au contraire*, in my opinion, they are much less so. But we know that their estates are so encumbered, as almost all Irish estates are, that it would be little short of madness in them to wed without finding money sufficient to clear some of the incumbrances. I have taken my daughters to London season after season, have gone to fashionable watering places until their faces are as well known as here, without having succeeded in establishing them. Their father blames me for the expenses so uselessly incurred, and threatens to prevent our going to England any more; so that I turn to the present chance with a faint hope of securing them husbands. At all events, I must leave nothing undone to draw the two individuals, Mr. Herbert Vernon and young Hunter, to

my house; and, should an occasion offer, I trust, my dear Countess, that you will impress these gentlemen with a favourable opinion of my girls. A good word from a person so esteemed and respected as you are might do much. But—hush!—I hear my girls, with Grace, returning from the garden."

"It is too absurd, I can't believe it," said Miss Fitzgerald, as she was entering the drawing-room, accompanied by her sister and Miss O'Neill.

"What is too absurd, my dear!" inquired her mother.

"Nothing less than Honor O'Flaherty, who has been walking with us in the garden, having assured us that she has made a conquest of Mr. Hunter."

"Of Mr. Hunter!" exclaimed Lady Fitzgerald, her countenance betraying that this intelligence afforded her great dissatisfaction. "I can't believe it; for she does nothing but ridicule and quiz him, and I never heard of a man being quizzed into falling in love."

"I think it is only one of Honor's *hoaxes*, as she terms all attempts to impose on the credulity of her acquaintances," observed

Miss Kate Fitzgerald; "for, although Mr. Hunter does not seem to be very wise, I don't think he can be quite so foolish as to select Honor O'Flaherty for a wife."

"But he may admire her without any such serious intention," said Lady Fitzgerald. "A flirtation got up with a pretty girl coquettish enough to encourage him, and too wild and inexperienced to be aware of the evil consequences of such unguarded conduct, is a very different thing from a matrimonial project."

"Poor Honor. I hope she will not allow herself to be made a fool of. I must really advise her on this subject," observed the Countess O'Neill gravely, "for her mother, I am sorry to say, has but little influence over her."

"For my part, I think Honor is more likely to make a fool than to be made one," remarked Miss Kate Fitzgerald, "for she is a very cunning girl, and having, as she herself confessed to us half an hour ago, determined on securing a husband, will not stop at trifles to accomplish her aim."

"Well, we shall see, we shall see," replied Lady Fitzgerald, evidently piqued and

alarmed at the notion that her own schemes to secure Mr. Hunter as a husband for one of her daughters were likely to be endangered by the ambitious projects of Honor O'Flaherty, whom she had hitherto considered by no means a rival to be dreaded for her young ladies. "It is true," thought she to herself, "Honor is, I must confess, infinitely better-looking than my girl, but she is so untutored, so very *Irish*, that I should think an Englishman would be more shocked than attracted by her wild spirits and *brusquerie*, while my daughters have acquired the reserve and *biensćances* peculiar to English girls accustomed to fashionable society in London. Mais, qui sait? Perhaps it is the constraint imposed by their adoption of English manners, which, like a tight dress, to be worn only on state occasions, sits awkwardly on them, that has deprived them of the sprightliness and vivacity which they formerly possessed, and which, in my opinion, rendered them more attractive. However this may be, certain it is that they approach that age which, once passed, terribly diminishes the chance of girls getting married; and, although we have spent more money in dinners

and balls than was prudent, considering the expenses of my son's contested election, not a single offer of marriage has been made, and Sir Geoffrey grows very testy and reproachful of late whenever bills are sent in. Yes, I must make some efforts without delay to bring on flirtations, and not allow my plans to be defeated."

Such were the reflections which filled the mind of Lady Fitzgerald as she and her daughters were returning to Ballymacross Castle, in no very good humour; and the result of her cogitations was a consultation with her ladyship's liege lord on the best mode of carrying on the campaign against the liberty of the Hon. Mr. Herbert Vernon and Mr. Hunter, whose hearts were no longer free.

"You are wrong to fill the house with pretty girls, my dear Martha," observed the Baronet, "when you invite the officers here. It is a bad policy I assure you, for men *will* make comparisons between girls when opportunities are afforded them, and our daughters, we must allow, are much less good-looking than could be wished."

"They certainly are not beauties, it must

be owned, and I'm sure I can't guess who they take after, for I, when a girl"—and here the speaker drew herself up and glanced in an opposite mirror—"was among the favourite toasts in the county."

"Perhaps, my dear, it was the being so much toasted that made you so brown," observed Sir Geoffrey, a wicked smile playing about his mouth; for the Baronet, be it told, could not resist a joke, though even at the expense of his friend or wife, and was not particular whether it was of ancient or modern origin.

"Thank you, Sir Geoffrey, thank you," replied his *cara sposa*, growing red in the face. "If *your*"—laying a peculiar emphasis on the word *your*—"daughters were as good-looking as I was at their age, they would not now be unmarried. But, unhappily for them, they do not in the least resemble *me*, or any of my family."

"They take after *me*, I suppose," observed Sir Geoffrey, "though, as I was fair-complexioned and flaxen-haired, and they are *brunettes*, I can't see the resemblance."

"But I had such a peculiar transparency of complexion, such beautiful hair, such

bright eyes, and such remarkably fine teeth; none of which advantages do *your* daughters possess, Sir Geoffrey, that no man with eyes in his head could say that they bear the slightest resemblance to me. Look at my portrait, that proves the truth of my assertions."

"Not at all. The artist who painted it was known to flatter his sitters to the most absurd degree, so much so, that few could recognise the slightest likeness between the originals and their pictures; and I remember when the portrait in question was sent home all our visitors used to inquire who it was meant for."

"On the contrary, every one declared it to be a very unfavourable likeness, and blamed the artist for not having rendered me justice. *Your* portrait was, I admit, grossly flattered; yes, Sir Geoffrey, grossly, however surprised and incredulous you may look, for it represented you with a fair complexion, instead of a nankeen-tinted face with straw-coloured hair, and totally left out the brown freckles which always made your face look like a turkey egg."

"Yours, at this moment, my dear, is——

but no, I will not say what it resembles. I leave personalities to you, Lady Fitzgerald; but let me tell you that, if you had been as candid thirty-five years ago as you have now proved yourself, you might have longed for turkey eggs and nankeen all the days of your life, without my furnishing them."

"Who provoked me, Sir Geoffrey, I should like to know?"

"And who began, Lady Fitzgerald? Do you ever call my girls '*your* daughters' except to remind me that they are *mine*, because they are plain? On every other occasion, you speak of them as if they belonged only to you."

And off walked the Baronet, loudly slamming the door as he left the apartment.

## CHAPTER XV.

"I WISH I had not quarrelled with him," said Lady Fitzgerald to herself when left to her own meditations, "for now he will be so sulky for several days that it will be useless to propose new plans to him for bringing the young men on whom I have views here. But he really is so unbearable, so rude, and says such personal things, that he is enough to make a saint lose her temper. He was right, however, on one point. It is no use filling the house with other girls to counteract my schemes for our own, nor to invite other men than those who would make suitable husbands, to observe, and perhaps warn, those we have designs on. Lookers-on often see the game that is playing, better than those engaged in it, and I will ask only Mr. Herbert Vernon and Hunter. I will propose

our going to Deer Park to spend a week, and engage these young men to accompany us. Much may be effected in a week when young persons are thrown constantly together, and, if my daughters are not fools, they may so play their cards as not to let this opportunity pass without profiting by it."

Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald was by no means a man who bore malice long, notwithstanding that his wife accused him of being sulky. The anger of the morning generally subsided under the influence of a good dinner and a bottle of claret, and on the day in question, Lady Fitzgerald, as a peace-offering, had agreeably surprised him by the presence of one of his most favourite dishes prepared by her orders, and which had not been entered in the bill of fare. This system of conciliation never had failed, a system which most, if not all, wives with husbands inclined to be *gourmands* would do well to adopt; and, when the cover was removed from this favourite dish, and its savoury fumes tickled the olfactory nerves of the Baronet, a broad smile revealed his restored good humour, and a request to his "dear Martha" to drink a glass of wine with him assured her that the

personal affronts offered him some hours before were forgiven.

Well has it been observed by a philosopher who knew mankind profoundly, that they are generally governed by those who have studied their weaknesses, rather than by persons well aware of their virtues; and often had Lady Fitzgerald proved the truth of the reflection in her management of her kind-hearted but somewhat impatient husband. On the present occasion, when her daughters left the dining-room, she remained with Sir Geoffrey while he drank his claret; and, after an artful preamble, introduced her plan of a week's sojourn at Deer Park with so much tact, that he listened to it with good humour.

"But why not invite these officers here, Martha, instead of to Deer Park? We shall have to send many things there to render the house habitable, for you know it is at present a little in the Castle Rack-rent style, and the transporting of the necessary objects will be attended with considerable expense."

"You are quite right, my dear; indeed I must do you the justice to say you generally

are; but in the present case my motive for preferring Deer Park is, that, it being well known to our neighbours that owing to the dilapidated state of the place and the paucity of furniture, we cannot receive more than two or three visitors, they cannot feel offended at not being engaged, so that the girls will have the undivided attention of Messrs. Herbert Vernon and Hunter."

"A capital plan, Martha, an excellent plan, to which I willingly assent; but do you know that it struck me when we gave our last gala that Grace O'Neill had made a deep impression on Mr. Herbert Vernon, and that that madcap, Honor O'Flaherty, wholly engrossed Hunter? I move about, look here, and look there, and make my own observations, and such was the result."

"Nevertheless, my dear, I think it worth our while to try my plan. We should leave no effort untried to give our girls a chance; and men are very prone, when those they prefer are absent, to be content with those who are present."

The invitations were sent and promptly accepted by the gentlemen in question, in the full belief that the ladies of their love

would be of the party, each anticipating with pleasure the opportunity thus afforded of enjoying their society. But "a change came o'er the spirit of their dream" when the following day they ascertained that neither Miss O'Neill nor Miss O'Flaherty was invited, and they heartily regretted having accepted the invitation to "Deer Park."

"There's some plot hatched by Lady Fitzgerald, I am sure," thought Honor O'Flaherty, when Mr. Hunter informed her of the intended visit to Deer Park, "but I'll defeat it, or my name is not Honor O'Flaherty; and, perhaps, the cunning old lady may find that the plan she has formed to spoil my chance may be turned to advance it. I think it's rather unfair that she who hawks her daughters half over England every summer, can't let us, poor girls, who haven't the means to go there to show ourselves, have a chance when it is thrown in our way. Don't be too sure, my lady, that, after all, I don't defeat your schemes, for when it comes to securing a husband I won't stand on trifles, I can promise you. I'll set all my wits to work, and make my Lady Fitzgerald feel that she's no

match for me when I take it into my head to carry a point. Poverty and dependence are rare sharpeners of the wit, and I have tasted both so long, that I know the bitterness too well not to endeavour to escape from them. Courage, Honor, and assert your right to fight for the prize the old lady would wrest from your grasp. I'll just put on my bonnet and step to the Countess O'Neill's; perhaps I may hear of something there to help me to work out my plan."

Miss O'Flaherty found Grace in the garden, and alone. "Are you asked to Deer Park?" was the first question she addressed to her friend.

"No," was the answer, "but if I were I would have declined the invitation."

"And why?"

"Because I prefer staying at home with my grandmother."

"But don't you think it rather strange, Grace, that neither you nor I have been invited?"

"Not in the least. Surely the Fitzgeralds, who are always so kind and hospitable to their friends, need not engage all of

them on every occasion, and more especially when they go to Deer Park, where there is so little accommodation for company."

"But why go to Deer Park, where there is so little accommodation?"

"Because they prefer it, I suppose; and, probably, because they wish to encourage their tenants there, and assist the poor."

"Well, Grace, you are simple as a child. *You* never see anything but good in everything. Now, I'll lay a wager that this visit to that old ruined barrack, Deer Park, is a plan got up by Lady Fitzgerald to have Mr. Herbert Vernon and Mr. Hunter all to themselves for a week, free from our presence."

"How can you, Honor, be so suspicious, so ungrateful?"

"How can I be so much more sharp-sighted than you are, Grace? That's what you should say."

"There are times, Honor, and this is one of them, when I feel so displeased with you, that I am ready to abjure our friendship. I can't bear ingratitude, or suspicion."

"I should like to know what I am to be

so mighty grateful to Lady Fitzgerald for?"

"If your own heart does not tell you, it would be vain to remind you."

"You are always for making molehills into mountains, Grace."

"And you, *vice versâ*, are for making mountains into molehills."

"Because I am not ready to think that I owe eternal gratitude to the Fitzgeralds for sending my mother the surplus of their comforts, which they never miss, and which, if not sent to her, would go to some one else."

"Oh! Honor, this is rank ingratitude, and pains me more than I can express."

"What they and others have done for my mother I would be quite as ready to do for them, if I possessed the means."

"I do hope and trust you would; but, although the power be denied you of testifying this otherwise than by your gratitude, the consciousness of a warm sense of favours received justifies to one's own feelings their acceptance, and precludes the sense of humiliation."

"Well, wait, Grace, until I have secured

a rich husband, and then all who have helped my mother will find that I am not ungrateful."

"Could you repay tenfold the kindness shown to your mother, you would still subject yourself to the imputation of ingratitude, unless you felt as grateful as if you had never done so. Repaying kindness does not exonerate the payer from the debt, if the sense of it is obliterated from the mind."

"It's no good to reason with you, Grace. You and I see things in such a different point of view, that it's just the same as if you looked at some object through a blue glass, that made it look blue, and I looked on it through a green glass, that made it appear green; and that we were both to insist that it was as each of us saw it."

"No, Honor, your comparison is not correct. There is but one true and fair medium of viewing moral feelings and principles; and that is by regarding objects through an unprejudiced mind, which may be likened to an unstained glass."

"Have it all your own way, Grace; you are as like your grandmother as two peas in all your thoughts and ways."

"Would I could believe this, Honor; for then I should consider that you paid me the greatest compliment I ever received."

"Now don't let us go on preaching, Grace, there's a dear, good girl, for I'm quite as angry at Lady Fitzgerald's engaging your beau as mine; and, if I were you, I'd tell him not to go, and that would serve the old lady right."

"My beau!" repeated Miss O'Neill, a blush overspreading her face.

"Yes, your beau! You don't mean to say that Mr. Herbert Vernon is not in love with you, I hope."

"No girl has a right to assert that a man is in love with her who has never told her so," observed Grace; "and I should be extremely sorry to be assured that Mr. Herbert Vernon felt a preference for me which I could not reciprocate."

"There, Grace, with all your wisdom you are wrong. It is always as well to have as many admirers as possible, for one can play them off against each other. If Mr. Herbert Vernon would propose for you, which I think, with a little encouragement, he might be got to do, and that you refused him, for

which, begging your pardon, I think you'd be a great fool to do, that might encourage Captain S. Mordant to propose. Oh! how you blush, Grace: and you would not refuse *him*, I suppose."

"How poor an opinion you must entertain of me!" said Miss O'Neill, with an air of offended dignity, "if you think I could descend to such unworthy means to secure a husband. Captain Sydney Mordant is nothing more to me than Mr. Herbert Vernon. I have not had the slightest reason to suppose that he entertains the slightest preference for me, so——"

"Why do you blush then, Grace? Is all the preference at your side?"

"I repeat there is no preference at either side, and I request that the subject may cease."

Ah, Grace, Grace! if you would only play your cards as I'd advise you, you'd soon be married. Let Captain Herbert Vernon propose, and then let me tell Hunter, under the seal of strict secrecy of it, which will, of course, induce him to inform Captain Mordant of the fact. This will rouse Mordant, if he really has a liking to you, which I

strongly suspect, to propose likewise, and, if he should not, you can marry Vernon."

"Not another word, Honor, unless you wish to put an end to our friendship. You have shown me that you entertain a very poor opinion of my character and conduct in supposing me capable of adopting the advice you have given."

"There are some persons whom one cannot serve, and you are one of them, Grace; and there's an end of it," replied Miss O'Flaherty, more than half disposed to be angry. "Let us go to your grandmother, for my mother will be bothering me with questions about her when I go home, and I must have my answers ready."

When the two young girls entered the drawing-room, they found the Countess O'Neill absent, and Grace, fearful that she might be unwell, sought her in her chamber, leaving Honor O'Flaherty alone. Possessed of an insatiable curiosity, this wild and wayward girl was deterred by no honourable or delicate scruples from gratifying it whenever any opportunity was afforded her, and on this occasion, seeing a letter with a broken

seal on the table near the Countess's easy-chair, she snatched it, and hurriedly made herself mistress of its contents. She paused for a moment, and then, instead of restoring the letter to its place, hastily consigned it to her pocket, and, opening the window next the chair of the Countess, resumed her seat at the other end of the room, and, taking up a book, pretended to be busily engaged with its contents as she heard the approaching footsteps of Grace. "It was as I supposed," said Miss O'Neill, "my grandmother has been seized by a severe headache, and has lain down."

"And I won't keep you from her," observed Honor, rising to depart; "so good bye, Grace, and mind you forget and forgive anything I may have said to displease you; for, be assured, I had only your good at heart, for no one loves you better than I do."

"Farewell, Honor. Oh! how I wish I could bring you to think as I do, and to lay aside all unworthy projects and schemes to obtain a husband. They are so unfeminine, so indelicate, that all who discover them must think less of you than you deserve, for

I will not, I cannot, believe that you are the worldly-minded girl you profess to be."

"Why, sometimes I am only joking," replied Honor, with a smile, as she departed.

## CHAPTER XVI.

"And so that blockhead, Sir Henry Travers, has made his proposal for her," said Honor O'Flaherty, locking her door carefully to prevent intrusion, and drawing from her pocket the letter she had purloined at the Countess O'Neill's. "Here," resumed she, "is a girl who has never given him the least encouragement, and to whom he offers his hand, while I, who tried all my arts to bring him to the point, totally failed, which is the reason I am always hoaxing and bantering him. Who knows, if I had not enraged him, but that, finding himself refused by Grace, he might have fallen to my lot? Lady Travers! how well it would have sounded, and what a gay life I should lead if I bore it! It was foolish to wage war

against him. A girl who has set her heart on being married never should make enemies. I must be more on my guard in future, for I see the evil consequences of letting out either one's anger or one's plans. I am now convinced that, had I not told the Fitzgerald girls that I should soon secure Hunter, this party to Deer Park would not have been got up; but I must be wiser in future.

"This same proposal shall be turned to good account;" and she again perused the letter. "Fortunately, the Baronet writes such a long, straggling, illegible hand, that, by scratching out some words and scribbling in others I can make Hunter believe the proposal is for me, and addressed to my mother. This will, this *must*, have a great effect on his feelings, and I'll take care to play my cards so well that he shall believe I have rejected Travers because I am in love with him. What good fun it will be, and how well I'll get through my part! But first let me make the necessary alterations in this precious letter." And, effacing some words and adding others, the letter might pass even to a cleverer person than Mr. Hunter,

as having been addressed to Mrs. O'Flaherty. To be sure the terms of profound respect in which the proposal was expressed did seem somewhat absurd as addressed to such a weak and ridiculous person as Mrs. O'Flaherty, and as referring to so wild and unreserved a young lady as her daughter, and did make Honor more than once burst into uncontrollable laughter as she perused them; but she counted on the stupidity of Mr. Hunter for not detecting this want of *vraisemblance*, and relied on her own talent for passing it off.

"The Countess and her grand-daughter will never mention to any one that Travers has proposed. I know their starched notions on these points too well to have any fear. Grace will repel him with all due politeness, and there will be an end of the matter; but even should she accept him, which I think utterly out of the question, I can always make Hunter believe that Travers only proposed to Grace O'Neil when he found that I would not accept him. How I long to show the letter to Hunter, and to disclose to him my terror lest my mother should compel me to marry the Baronet on account

of his great riches! I must even get up a few tears, if necessary, to impose on my admirer, and cover my face with my handkerchief, to hide, not my blushes, but the absence of them. I wouldn't have half the satisfaction in marrying Hunter had he really taken a fancy to me and proposed in the regular way; but to have brought it around by my own cleverness, there is the triumph."

When Honor O'Flaherty met Mr. Hunter the following day by the seaside, where latterly their meetings had been very frequent, she assumed a pensive air, which was so unusual to her that her admirer inquired the cause.

"I am wretched," replied the young lady, "for that odious Sir Henry Travers has proposed for me."

"He has, has he? Well, but let me tell you it's an offer many girls would jump at. He has a capital fortune, a fine place, and is rather a gentlemanlike sort of fellow."

"I would rather die than marry him, notwithstanding all his thousands a year and his fine place." And Honor called up a most sentimental expression of countenance.

"Is it that you like some one else?" inquired Hunter.

"How can *you* ask such a question? If I did *not* like some one else, would not this be a marriage that no girl could refuse?"

"Well, but if your affections are engaged you can refuse this Travers."

"That would be easily done; but my mother, as you may naturally imagine, when you reflect on my having no fortune, is so anxious for me to accept this offer, that I shall have no peace nor quiet at home until I do. Look, here is the letter. She received it yesterday, and, when I requested that a refusal should immediately be sent to Sir Henry, she said I must be mad, yes, positively mad, to think of rejecting such a proposal. I dare not, of course, tell her that my heart is engaged."

"Why not?"

"Because the person to whom I have unfortunately given it has never told me that he had bestowed his heart on me in exchange;" and Honor applied her handkerchief to her face, whether for the purpose of concealing her blushes, or wiping away a tear, her admirer could not ascertain. He took her hand in his and pressed it, hesitated for a moment, and then, clearing his throat, said,

"Any fellow that had the good fortune to be liked by you would be a devilish ungrateful dog if he did not love you, in return. I am a poor hand at making fine speeches; it is quite out of my line; but, by Jove! if you refuse Travers on my account, I shall think myself bound to marry you myself."

"Oh, James, dear James, do you indeed love me?"

"I suppose I do," was the ungallant answer; "for I never before asked any girl to marry me, although two or three girls, ay, and very pretty ones, too, I can assure you, were dying in love with me."

"I can well believe it," and a deep sigh followed the admission, "for who, dear James, could help loving you?"

"There are some fellows in our regiment who pretend that it is only the fortune to which people know I am heir that has made girls wish to marry me."

"And are you heir to a fortune?" inquired Honor, with a most artless countenance. "I am so sorry you are rich."

"Why so?"

"Because you have probably a father, or a guardian, or some one who, for that very

reason, may prevent you from marrying a girl who has no fortune; whereas, if you were poor, no one would interfere."

"You are a true-hearted girl, Honor, that you are, and I like you all the better for loving me only for myself. But don't be uneasy as to any one interfering to prevent my marrying you. I am of age, a trip to Gretna Green is easily accomplished, and, the knot once tied, then all would be safe. As to asking my old governor's consent, that would be useless; he would not hear of my marrying anything short of an earl's daughter, in order that there may be a Lady Augusta, or a Lady Mary, in the family; for the old boy and girl have a great fancy for titles; and, as to my marrying an Irish girl, they would as soon consent to my wedding a wild Indian."

"But, if you offend them, they may refuse to forgive you—may disinherit you; and, though *I* don't value riches, you may, and I should be wretched to be the cause of your losing your fortune."

"Not they. They are not such fools. I have offended them fifty times; but they have always been as ready to forgive as I

was to offend; and so they will when we have made a runaway marriage. They'll make a great fuss at first—they'll swear they'll not receive you, and that they'll cut off the supplies to me—but we'll let them cool down by degrees, and then they'll find out that it's no such easy matter to break with an only son on whom they doat, and we'll be invited to Wintern Abbey, receive lots of presents and cash, and there will be an end of the matter."

"Oh! dear James, how happy we shall be!"

"That we shall, Honor. I'll buy you a couple of such nags, and take you out hunting with me. I'll have a coach, and drive four-in hand; and you'll sit on the box with me, and we'll go to all the races. But mind, Honor, there's one condition which I must make, and without which I would not marry any woman on earth, and that is, you must not interfere with my smoking. Without my cigars, I should be like a fish out of water, and I should soon hate any woman who objected to them."

"You little know me, dear James, if you suppose that I could object to anything that

gave you pleasure. But, in the present case, it happens that I have a peculiar liking to the smell of tobacco; so much so, that I have often longed to smoke a cigar myself."

"Then, by Jove! you shall; and it will look devilish knowing to see you in a riding-habit, with your hat a little on one side and a cigar in the corner of your mouth; which will show off your red lips to advantage."

"Oh! delightful! What rare fun we shall have! Won't we quiz your brother officers, and laugh at them! We'll be two against one; whatever you say, I'll swear to; and you'll do the same by me, won't you?"

"You may swear to it. But mind, Honor, don't let the least hint slip that we intend to marry. The Colonel, if he suspected it, would write to my governor, and I should be sent to England on leave of absence. No; we'll keep all snug and quiet until my next quarter's allowance falls due, and, when I touch the money, I'll get a month's leave, and we'll make a start for Gretna Green. Another thing, too, Honor; mind you don't lose that proposal of Sir Henry Travers, for it will be well to show it to the governor and the old girl when we go to Wintern

Abbey, that they may see what an offer you refused for me. A baronet with ten thousand a year, and I'll persuade them he has twenty, will show them what you might have done in your own country, and make them think more of their daughter-in-law."

"I'll keep the letter safe enough, and send an answer to it before the day is over. How the poor Baronet will fret and fume when he gets my refusal! Poor man, I could almost find it in my heart to pity him!"

"How oddly things turn out, to be sure! Would you believe it, Honor, that when we met at those balls at the Fitzgeralds', I fancied that Sir Henry Travers disliked you instead of loving you?"

"Because I did all in my power to discourage his addresses, and that used to enrage him."

"But what's more odd, Honor, when first I knew you, I never thought I should fall in love with you myself, and would have betted ten to one against it; and even now I hardly know how it came about."

"But I do, fool," thought Honor. "Your vanity and folly rendered you an easy prey and, knowing that it was not affection that

prompted you to choose me, I never can have any regard to your feelings, once the knot is fastened."

While this thought passed through the mind of the unprincipled and reckless girl, a fond smile and a pressure of Hunter's hand, drew from him an avowal that now all was settled between them, he would not give her up for the handsomest and richest girl in England, were she even a duke's daughter, "although," as he confessed, "he had always wished to marry some tip-top girl of fashion."

"You might have married any girl you took a fancy to, my dear James," said Honor, with a sentimental air; "for where, I should like to know, could the highest girl in the land meet with so fine a young man as you are?"

"Why, I believe I am not a sort of fellow to be refused, to tell you the truth; and one thing I can swear, which is, that I never asked any girl the broad staring question of 'Will you marry me?' until I proposed to you, Honor; and, what's more, hang me! if some time ago an angel had told me that I should marry you, I should have laughed

outright at the bare notion; yet here I am fairly caught, and ready to take you for better for worse, as the saying is, the moment we can get off. As I said before, I often wonder how it all came about, and I'll tell you how I account for it. Whenever I fancied formerly, that I was smitten with a girl, I used to think of her, and even go so far as to be unhappy. I hated being put out of sorts about her sometimes, and ever since I have known you I always leave you in better humour with myself. You talk to me about *me* much more than about *you*. You say pleasant things to me—tell me that I am good looking and clever, which none of the other girls I flirted with ever did, for they were thinking more of themselves than of me—and you ridicule and quiz all the fellows in my regiment, who have such a high opinion of themselves, yet seem to hold me cheap,—that I said to myself, 'Honor is the girl for me. To be sure, she is not so refined and elegant in her manner as some of my old flames in England, but as she pleases me better, and puts me in better humour with myself, that's the point.'"

Honor O'Flaherty, reckless and coarse-

minded as she was, felt the full force of the *naïve* admissions of the weak, vain, and selfish Hunter. "Oh, won't I pay you for all this?" thought she to herself, while the flush of anger mounted to her brow. "So the fool, not content with preferring me only because I flatter him, must make me feel this humiliating fact every time we meet. It is the flattery, and not the flatterer, he likes; and it is to ensure this gratification that he intends to marry me. But he shall find himself disappointed, I can promise him, for Mrs. James Hunter will scorn to flatter her husband, however she might have condescended to administer to the vanity of her foolish lover. He has let out some disagreeable truths to me *before* wedlock, and I will let out fifty times more to him after."

"I am thinking that it is no use, and I am sure it will be no pleasure to me, to go to Deer Park to the Fitzgeralds," observed Hunter. "I should be like a fish out of water there, Honor, without you. The Fitzgerald girls never say an agreeable thing to one. They seem to be always thinking of themselves, while I only like persons who think of me."

"I must take care and not let him fall in the way of any girl who will flatter him more than I do," thought Honor, "for I do believe that if a Gorgon were to lay the honey on thicker he would prefer her to me."

"What say you, Honor, shall I go or not?"

"I shall be sorry to lose you for a week, dear James," and the lady sighed, "but if you wish to go I prefer your pleasure to my own."

"Then by Jove! I won't go a step, and I'll write an excuse at once."

## CHAPTER XVII.

While Herbert Vernon was becoming more enamoured at every interview with Miss O'Neill, she began to feel a stronger sentiment than indifference rising in her breast towards him, as she observed that the coldness of her reception did not prevent the perseverance of his attentions to her. She had conceived, whether justly or unjustly, a notion that his frequent visits prevented those of Captain Sydney Mordant; and this notion led her to dislike Mr. Vernon, to whom, otherwise, she would have experienced no livelier feeling than perfect indifference.

There is one striking difference between the nature of men and women. A man has often been known, as in the case of Hunter, not only to vanquish a conceived dislike to

a woman because he has been led to think she preferred him, but to feel, or fancy he feels, a preference for her; while a woman has seldom, if ever, been won to like a man whose attentions her avoidance of him had not the power to check. Do not think, dear male readers, that this difference originates in any peculiar good qualities of your sex, such as gratitude or good-nature. No; it springs solely from gratified vanity, that cannot resist the food it loves to feed on. Women, if handsome, being accustomed to flattery from their childhood, become satiated with it, unless he who administers it suits their tastes. Hence they have no gratitude for a preference they value not; while men, in the superabundance of their vanity, often yield up their freedom, if not their affections, to the woman who will minister to it, however unsuited in mind or person she may be to their tastes.

Whenever Mr. Herbert Vernon's name was announced in the drawing-room of the Countess O'Neill that lady observed an expression of dissatisfaction overspread the countenance of her grand-daughter, and, although too well-bred to suffer any visible in-

dications of her growing dislike to become apparent to him who excited it, her involuntary absence of mind when he addressed her, and her monosyllabic replies, might have taught a more sensitive or more experienced suitor that he had wholly failed to make a favourable impression on the heart he so ardently desired to win. No roseate blush of pleasure, no dimpled smile, no unconscious start, those certain indications of a growing preference, betrayed that the presence of her admirer was welcome to Grace O'Neill. Nevertheless, Mr. Herbert Vernon's passion was quite strong enough to live on without the food of encouragement required by other men to bring a passion to maturity, and, with the blindness peculiar to lovers, he believed that, once his affection should be declared to its object, she might be induced to treat him with less coldness.

Every time they met this declaration hovered on his lips, but how to make it to one who remained so near the chair of her grandmother that not a syllable could be addressed to her without its being audible to that lady? And a declaration, as all lovers know, or ought to know, never has a good effect if more than

*two* pair of *ears* can hear it. Various and, as he thought, clever hints, plain even to the least quick intellect, used he to direct on the subject of love and conjugal happiness to Grace, descriptive of the sort of person who alone could tempt him to seek the altar of the saffron-robed binder of hands, descriptions so entirely applicable to her, that no one save a person obstinately determined not to understand them could mistake their meaning. But, when Mr. Herbert Vernon turned his eyes to the beautiful face he hoped to find suffused by a blush of consciousness of what was passing in his heart, he became chilled by the unconcerned and indifferent countenance of the lady, and the words he would fain utter died on his tongue.

While he continued from day to day to pursue his unpromising suit, Captain Sydney Mordant waited impatiently to hear its result. Often would he say to himself, "What can it be to me? Will her refusal of poor Herbert place me in a different position? Can I, with my scanty portion as a *cadet de famille*, offer any fair prospect of a provision for a wife and family? Never before did I regret my poverty. But now, when it raises a barrier

between me and the only woman I ever wished to call mine, I feel, ay, bitterly feel it, and lament for the first time the chance that sent my brother into the world a year before me. Happy Vernon, who can pass whole hours in her society, who is enabled by his position to sue for the hand I would give worlds to call mine! Yet, if he should sue in vain, if she should reject the brilliant fortune he can lay at her feet, will he not, with all his riches, be as unhappy as I am who have none? I knew not when I promised to leave the field open to him who could, in wedding her, bestow rank, and fortune too, how much pain the sacrifice would cost me.

"Never do I see him direct his steps to the Countess O'Neill's door without a jealous pang shooting through my heart. I examine his countenance, when he returns, with inexpressible anxiety, in order to read in it what progress he has made in his suit. If he looks cheerful, a sentiment approaching to hatred fills my mind, for I am tortured by the supposition that he has had cause to hope; and it is only when I notice that he is gloomy and depressed that my old friendship for him

revives; because I attribute his *tristesse* to his want of success with the beautiful Grace. What must she think of my avoidance of her? Does she regret not seeing me? But fool, vain fool that I am, it is but too probable that, while this constrained absence inflicts misery on me, she has never observed it. And yet have I not seen her lovely face brighten up when I approached her? Have I not seen a rosy blush bespread it when I've entered the room, and beheld her matchless eyes sparkle, and then veil themselves beneath their transparent lids, as if they dreaded to betray their increased lustre to me? Have I not had as much experience of women as most men of my age, ay, and of some of the most spotless of the sex, too? And could I be deceived into the belief that I was not totally indifferent to her, which I have dared to indulge? No, if I know myself, I am *not* a vain man, nor one who could conjure up such a fancy without a base to build it on. If looks and blushes may ever be trusted, and surely they are the most artless of all indications, then may I believe that my presence created a livelier interest in the breast of the lovely Grace O'Neill than that of any other man!

"Herbert Vernon grows less communicative, less confidential, every day. Is this the result of *in*creasing or *de*creasing hope to gain his suit? Perhaps, knowing my deep admiration for Grace, he wishes to spare my feelings by not telling me his success. But what if his silence on the subject should originate in the objection all men, even the least vain of us all, feel in confessing that they have failed to please the object of their passion? Yes, it may be so. I will cheat myself into this hope, and then, my poor friend, Vernon, I will, indeed, pity instead of envying you."

When, a few minutes after this soliloquy, Mordant encountered Vernon returning from his visit to the Countess O'Neill's, the reverie in which he seemed plunged, and the gravity of his countenance, betokened none of the happiness peculiar to a favoured suitor. Vernon would have passed on without recognising his friend, so deep was his abstraction, had not Mordant exclaimed, "How now, Vernon! are you going to cut me?"

The latter started, as if awakening from a dream, and, holding out his hand, said, "I really did not see you; my thoughts were so deeply engaged elsewhere."

"I hope on an agreeable subject?"

"Would I could say yes! but, alas! my dear fellow, the contrary is the fact. But let us adjourn to your room, or mine; the street is a bad place to converse in, on what so powerfully excites my feelings. You have acted so honourably to me, my dear Mordant, that I ought to have no concealment with you. Indeed, I think myself blameable in not having sooner reported progress to you, though, on second thoughts, I have used the wrong word; for I have made no progress at all with Miss O'Neill, who, I verily believe, feels rather *more* than *less* indifferent towards me than when first I knew her."

Mordant felt a glow of pleasure diffused through his breast as he listened to this avowal, although the next moment he blamed himself for his selfishness. Having entered Herbert Vernon's room, the latter threw himself on a sofa, looking so mortified that even Mordant felt pity for him.

"All my assiduities, and all the love in which they originated, have failed to touch her heart," said Herbert Vernon. "She does not, or, rather, I believe, she *will* not, understand the passion she has inspired. I have

gone on, hoping from day to day to observe some slight indication of pleasure at my approach, or regret for my absence; but I have watched for such in vain, and I have at length come to the conclusion that I have not the most remote chance of ever making any impression on her heart. Under these circumstances, I feel that I ought to discontinue my attentions; and yet I have not courage to banish myself from her presence, or to tear her from the heart she tortures. I am now determined to know the worst. I will declare my affection, and ask if I may dare to hope for its being sanctioned. Should she, as my fears suggest, decline my hand, I will apply for leave of absence, and go home; for I can no longer support the state of anxiety I have lately been enduring. Until she has positively refused me, I cannot entirely banish hope, and suspense is no longer bearable. You say nothing, Mordant—you offer no advice."

"What can I advise, my dear Vernon? I believe that, in your case, I should adopt the plan you propose; but the truth is, my own feelings are too much interested to render me competent to offer advice. Yes,

Vernon, I love Miss O'Neill—passionately love her; and neither prudence nor avoidance of her has as yet enabled me to triumph over my passion."

"Perhaps, Mordant, her total indifference to me may be caused by her preference to you?"

How Mordant's heart throbbed at the suggestion!

"No, no, Vernon, I dare not flatter myself on this point. Nay, more; I should regret, rather than rejoice, were your notion founded on truth. It would be weak, unmanly, and selfish to wish to create an interest in a heart I cannot, dare not, claim; and, however I might bear to struggle against my own unhappiness, I could not contemplate even the possibility of hers; if, indeed, she entertained a preference for me. I am too poor to offer her a home suitable to her merit and my own birth. I have no prospects to look forward to but promotion in my profession. With that and the scanty pittance of a younger brother I must be content; but sorry should I be to involve her I love in the perpetual difficulties entailed by straitened circumstances."

"But if you knew she loved you, Mordant, would you still have courage to resist suing for the hand which you believed she was ready to accord to you?"

"Yes, Vernon; if I know myself I think I should, for I could not bear to see her deprived of comforts to which she has ever been accustomed, and which my income could not furnish."

"One question more, Mordant. If you knew that she was pining for your love—that her happiness, her life, were at stake—could you still persist in avoiding her?"

"Why, Vernon, present such an hypothesis to me? Why vainly, uselessly, excite my feelings?"

"Because I strongly suspect, Mordant, that the case I have put to you is not wholly an hypothetical one. Yes, I believe that Grace O'Neill entertains for you that preference which I would give half my future fortune to inspire; and I am not so wholly selfish as not to wish to secure her happiness, although, alas! *I* cannot form it. Her absence of mind—her frequent relapses into *tristesse*, when she thought herself unobserved, —and which I, like a fool, fancied, in the

commencement of my acquaintance with her, might have their origin in a growing preference to myself—have, I am now quite certain, proceeded from an attachment to you. I remember the pleasure she took in your society—how her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks became pink as a new-blown rose, when you approached her. I recollect no such symptoms when any one else addressed her; and, consequently, it appears to me that you, whether willingly or otherwise, have won her affection.

"If her peace should be endangered, Mordant, you could not allow prudence to hinder you from avowing your passion. Every other consideration should yield to that. And now, to prove to you that I do not wholly disregard prudence, let me tell you my project. I will one day, as you know, be rich. All my father's property is entailed on me, but with me the entail ends, and I may bequeath the fortune, or any portion of it, to whom I like. My father has been too generous, too kind, to me to admit of my desiring to succeed him in the possession of the property, of which he makes so good a use, and I say with all sincerity of heart that I trust it will be many long years

before such an event may arrive. He gives me a much larger allowance than I spend, and, were I to require it to-morrow, would make me any advance I asked for. Let me, therefore, my dear Mordant, raise twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds, the interest for which I can pay out of my yearly allowance without being put to the slightest inconvenience; and this twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds will enable you to make a settlement to its full amount on your future wife, while the interest of the capital will make a comfortable addition to your income."

"My good, my generous friend," exclaimed Mordant, greatly touched by Vernon's offer, "how shall I express my deep sense of your friendship, so nobly proved by your unexampled generosity?"

"Make no attempt to thank me, but do better, my dear fellow. Accept my offer, without hesitation. You have not, I trust, waited until now to be convinced of the sincerity of my friendship for you, or to know how readily I would devote some of the wealth which will be mine to ensure your comfort. But, when to this old and warm

friendship is added the desire to secure the happiness of the only woman I ever loved, judge how eager I am that you should not refuse to accept from me the means of assuring it."

"But, my dear Vernon, I cannot."

"Don't say *cannot*, say *will not*," interrupted Vernon impatiently. "Are you too proud to owe happiness to a friend, or to risk that of a woman who loves you, sooner than vanquish a pride so ill-placed? Could we but change places, do you think I would refuse at your hands the offer I now make? No, on my honour, on my soul, I would not; and my happiness would be enhanced by the reflection that it was due to a friend."

"Do not think me unfeeling, ungrateful, dear Vernon; but this new proof of your unselfishness, your worth, makes me believe you more worthy of Miss O'Neill than I am. If she could know your offer, it would, it must, change the current of her sentiments, and make her comprehend the value of the heart ready to be proffered for her acceptance."

"No, Mordant, she must never know it. I, too, can be proud, and I would not owe

even the inestimable blessing of her hand to mere esteem called forth by an act the generosity of which you greatly exaggerate, but which I am perfectly convinced *you* would not hesitate to emulate, were it in your power."

"See her again, my dear friend, plead your suit, and demand her hand. If she rejects you, you will, by the manner in which it is done, be able to judge whether her refusal proceeds from a preference to another, or simply because you have not yet interested her affections. If the former be the cause, and that I should be really the object on which she has placed them, let time be given to see whether the growing tenderness may not subside when no indication of reciprocity encourages its duration; and who knows but, when time to become acquainted with and appreciate your merits be afforded her, that she may not yield you the boon you sigh for?"

"Only promise me one thing, Mordant, and that is, if I find Miss O'Neill's happiness disturbed, or her health fading, that you will accept the proposition I have made, and claim the hand I must not hope to possess."

"Let us wait the result of your proposal to her before I pledge myself," said Mordant, wringing the hand of his friend; and they parted.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"How strange, my dear Sir Geoffrey!" said Lady Fitzgerald, as she laid down on the table two notes she had been reading.

"What is strange, my dear?" inquired the old Baronet.

"Refusals from Mr. Vernon and Mr. Hunter: 'Very sorry they cannot have the honour of waiting on us at Deer Park.' There must be some cause for this refusal, Sir Geoffrey. Some manœuvre or other that I don't quite comprehend."

"I should set it down to nothing more or less than a want of inclination to join for a whole week a dull family party, my dear."

"That is so like you, Sir Geoffrey, always finding the simplest reasons for actions that are perfectly incomprehensible to others."

"Probably, because others search hidden motives when only the simplest exist. The gentlemen you invited have discovered that none of their acquaintances are asked, and, concluding that we shall be *en famille*, do not feel disposed to come. What can be more natural?"

"Or less flattering to us," was the brief reply; the lady who uttered it growing red in the face, always, with her, a symptom of a coming storm. "Who could have supposed that in so dull a place as ——, where so little civilized society can be had, that these men would refuse our invitation? They professed to be fond of shooting, too, yet, though I mentioned you could offer them some tolerable sport, they reject it. Yes, there must be some cause, and I'll not rest until I have discovered it."

"I think I could furnish the clue to the enigma," observed Sir Geoffrey coolly; "they have heard that the covers at Deer Park have been so ill preserved that magpies abound there in the proportion of ten to one partridge; that the keeper talks of *the* hare instead of hares; in short, that the prospect of even one day's tolerable shooting could

not be realized; and this, to men accustomed to the *battus* in England, was not encouraging."

"But our girls, and a good cook, and good wine, Sir Geoffrey?"

"All these combined temptations, my dear, they have resisted; and, if my advice be followed, it should be that no more attempts be made at match-making. The wildest birds on my estate are not so shy as the young men of our time, or more wary of any snare laid to catch them."

"Then how are matches to be made, I should like to know?"

"If we may believe some people, they are made in Heaven; but from this opinion I confess" (and Sir Geoffrey heaved a sigh) "I am strongly disposed to dissent. I incline to the belief that chance—and, above all, beauty have a great deal to do in the matter. A man sees a pretty girl, takes a fancy to her, hears other men chatter about her good looks, which last point has a great effect in exciting his passion; while the girl, pleased at his evident admiration, gives him just enough encouragement as serves to increase it, and the friends and relations, if wise, show

no anxiety to bring things to a close. When the young fellow has worked himself into the notion that he can't do without the girl, he proposes, and the marriage takes place."

"Then you would have parents and, especially, mothers take no part in getting their daughters married."

"Decidedly."

"But can you deny, Sir Geoffrey, how successfully Lady Moreland, Lady Bellaston, and many others whom I could name, have been in getting rid of their daughters?"

"I know their daughters have married early and well, but whether this was effected by their mammas or not I do not know. A woman must be nothing short of a magician, not to say sorceress, who can persuade a fellow with half an ounce of brains in his head, or of heart in his breast, to marry a girl who did not please his fancy. I don't say that, when a man has been struck by a pretty girl, a clever mother may not help on the affair by affording opportunities of meeting, and, above all, by appearing never to suspect that anything serious is going on or desired; but, as the cookery-book phrase has it, to make

hare-soup, 'first catch your hare,' so, to make a husband, first catch a lover."

"I am to suppose, then, that I do not possess the cleverness of other mothers who have succeeded in marrying off their daughters?" said Lady Fitzgerald, with an angry brow.

"We may naturally come to this conclusion, my dear, when your efforts during so many years have been so perfectly unavailing."

"They might have been otherwise, Sir Geoffrey, had you aided me," and the lady glanced angrily at her husband.

"Me aid you to kidnap poor devils! No, no, you'll never catch me at that work, Lady Fitzgerald; I'll never act as a decoy-duck to lure others into a scrape. If a fellow likes to marry a plain girl without a fortune, that's his affair, and I'll not discourage him; nay, more, I'll give him as much venison and claret as he can swallow; but there I take my stand, and nothing shall induce me to go beyond it.'

"Who ever dreamt of asking you to interfere more than most other reasonable fathers do? What I meant by your aiding me was,

to take a well-stocked manor in Norfolk, invite down to it some six or eight single men with good fortunes, keep an excellent cook, and have the best wine, and so give the girls a chance."

"And give myself something more than a chance—a positive certainty, Lady Fitzgerald—of becoming—a beggar. See into what straits I have already reduced myself. Am I not over head and ears in debt, owing to having adopted your advice in taking you and the girls to London for the last six seasons? I was quite sure nothing except debt and difficulties would come of it, but you positively bored me into it."

"As a member of Parliament you were obliged to be in London, Sir Geoffrey, and the expense of two establishments was saved by our going."

"Stuff and nonsense. A single man in London can get a cheap lodging, live at his club for a mere trifle, and dine out when he is asked. I could manage the whole thing for seven pounds a week; but, when a house for a family in a fashionable street is to be taken, servants engaged, carriages and horses to be had, dinners to be given, and, above

all, Lady Fitzgerald, milliners, mantua-makers, florists, shoemakers and hairdressers to be constantly employed, what a frightful sum does it require to defray all this unavailing expenditure! Money has to be borrowed, interest to be paid for it, and season after season adds to the difficulties of a poor devil of a father, who finds himself a ruined man without having achieved the object for which all this expense was incurred."

"Nevertheless, I still think, Sir Geoffrey, that had you taken the manor——"

"Taken leave of my senses," replied the Baronet, greatly excited. "I should have merited to be shut up in a madhouse, and would certainly, if not protected by the privilege of Parliament, be shut up in a prison. You seem to think that the whole purpose for which a man was sent into the world was to marry off his daughters, and that his own ruin is to be risked if not accomplished in the attempt. But henceforth, Lady Fitzgerald, you shall not find me so easily managed as hitherto. If my daughters are ever to find husbands it must be in Ireland, where a long line of ancient ancestors is still a title to respect."

So saying, Sir Geoffrey angrily left the room, leaving his weaker, if not his better half, considerably discomposed by the result of the matrimonial consultation.

"I have not seen him so angry for some time," soliloquized the irate matron. "He's always talking of being ruined. Every season the same story; yet still, somehow or other, we get on, as all the other people who are said to be ruined do. I never had any head for politics, or accounts. Every attempt at endeavouring to comprehend either never fails to give me a headache; consequently, I can't ascertain the truth of Sir Geoffrey's alarming statements, being as incompetent to look into his debts as to calculate the extent of the national one. I believe all men, except bill-brokers and speculating merchants, tell their wives they are ruined, or on the verge of being so; and the exceptions only refrain from terrifying their wives from the fear that *they*, in the frankness and candour peculiar to women, might extend the information to parties equally interested in it. Heigh-ho! I'm sure I wish that I was exempted from hearing on all occasions those frightful statements which Sir Geoffrey de-

lights in making; for, as I can do nothing to extricate him, it's of no use making me nervous and uncomfortable. I must, however, order some of his favourite dishes, in order to restore him to good humour. How lucky it is that I have discovered that the surest and shortest road to this desired end is through his stomach!"

The cook having been summoned, and having received Lady Fitzgerald's instructions for the peace-offering to be prepared for her husband, her ladyship sought the morning-room, where her daughters generally passed a portion of the day. She laid the letters from Messrs. Vernon and Hunter on the table for their perusal, and marked, while they alternately read them, the increased colour in their cheeks and the angry expression of their countenances.

"I am sure," observed Miss Fitzgerald, "that these foolish young men have already embarked in some absurd love affair or other, which prevents their accepting the invitation to Deer Park;" and she contemptuously threw the letter down.

"It proves that there was some truth in what Honor O'Flaherty boasted," said Miss Florence.

"That only regarded Mr. Hunter," remarked Lady Fitzgerald, "and does not account for Mr. Herbert Vernon's sending an excuse. Sophie told me this morning, when I was dressing, that Miss Magrath had informed her that Mr. Herbert is a frequent visitor at the Countess O'Neill's."

"Grace is, of course, the magnet that attracts him there?" said Miss Fitzgerald. "I suspected that she was setting her cap at him."

"How can you accuse her of such a thing, Florence? Grace is the last girl in the world to set her cap at any one."

"And why so, pray? Is she so mighty superior to all other girls as to disdain making an effort to win a suitor?"

"I really think so."

"Then I differ in opinion with you, Kate, and should not wonder if, after all, she carries off this prize."

"But she may accomplish this without any effort on her part. She is handsome and engaging enough to attract, and amiable enough to retain, any man who had a disengaged heart."

"You, I know, consider her a *rara avis*, a

piece of perfection, near which no other girl has a chance of being admired."

"For Heaven's sake, girls, don't get into an argument. If, as Sophie told me, Mr. Herbert Vernon is such a frequent visitor at the Countess O'Neill's, it's of no use thinking any more about him."

"I don't see that," observed Miss Fitzgerald; "and if I thought it worth my while to lay myself out to please Mr. Herbert Vernon, I should have little doubt of succeeding."

"I would not advise you to make the attempt, Florence."

"I don't require your advice."

"How silly it is to get up a discussion about trifles!" said Lady Fitzgerald. "I have just had a very disagreeable interview with your father, who has explained to me the utter impossibility of our going to England any more, such is the deplorable state of his finances."

"But so he has told you, mamma, regularly every year, and you have as regularly repeated the information to us, and yet we have gone to London a few months after. Papa has cried 'wolf' so often, that, like the

boy in the fable, when the wolf really did come, no one believed his cry."

"This time, however, Florence, I believe there is but too much truth in your father's assertions; for, although I do not pretend to know much about business, the difficulty of getting money to pay our bills, and the frequent depression of spirits which I notice in your poor father, convince me that he does not exaggerate the embarrassed state of his affairs."

"Then why did he allow them to get embarrassed? Why did he not regularly pay all bills?"

"These are the very questions I wished to ask him, but he looked so cross that I had not the courage."

"Depend on it, my poor father would have discharged his bills if he had had the money. Poor dear father! how a generous kind spirit like his must writhe under the pressure of debt!" And Miss Fitzgerald sighed deeply as she uttered the words.

"I am quite as much to be pitied as he is, my dear," said Lady Fitzgerald. "You have no idea how annoyed I was when I was tormented by Madame Falbala, before I left

London, for the amount of her bill; ay, and by half a dozen other duns who kept writing for a settlement of their small accounts, as they term it I never saw a vulgar-looking letter with a cipher on its seal without a shudder; and the sight of a column of arithmetical figures made me feel quite faint.'

"You were more sensitive on these points than I should have been," observed Miss Kate. "All persons of fashion are dunned, you may be quite sure, and after a little use one becomes quite accustomed to it. Besides, mamma, you, as a married woman, could not be arrested; and papa, as an M.P., was equally exempt from the penalties annexed to debt. With this conviction in your mind, you should not have allowed yourself to be made uneasy."

"I assure you, Kate, light as you make of it, the being compelled to ask one's husband for money, to see the elongation of face that takes place when one has stated one's wants, and to hear the long homily that is sure to follow, is not among the lightest of a woman's trials."

"I can quite comprehend it, mother, and blame myself for having been the cause of

subjecting you to this annoyance more than I ought. I might have done with fewer dresses, fewer bonnets and flowers, and should have done so, dear mother, if I had remembered, as I ought, the annoyance my extravagance would entail on you." And Miss Fitzgerald arose from her seat, and embraced her mother affectionately.

"You must not accuse yourself, dear Florence; I never found you extravagant."

"I should think not, for I am sure I have seen Florence wear dresses, flowers, satin shoes, and gloves that could no longer be termed fresh," observed Miss Kate.

"Florence is a much better manager than you are, Kate, I must say."

"Which means that she has not such a decided objection to faded finery as I have."

"As it now appears settled that we are not to go to England the ensuing season, it seems to me that you should both, my dear girls, turn your thoughts towards marrying in your native land."

"*Quelle horreur, quelle horreur!* Only fancy poor me married to one of the Irish squires in our neighbourhood!—a man I should be ashamed to present to any of my fashionable friends in London."

"But, if the London men won't seek your hands, you must make up your minds to bestow them on your own countrymen."

"Don't you think, dear mother, that it will be time enough to think of them when they pay any attention to us, which, hitherto, they have not seemed disposed to do."

"Because you have treated them rather *de haut en bas*."

"I certainly shall lay no snares to catch any of those wild birds," said Miss Kate.

"And I," observed her elder sister, "will make no rash vows to refuse a countryman until I am put to the test."

"Wisely determined, dear Florence, and may you soon have an opportunity of saying yes!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

The ensuing day after the confidential conversation with Mordant, Herbert Vernon, unable any longer to bear the suspense he had lately sustained, addressed a letter to the Countess O'Neill, entreating her to sanction his addresses to her grand-daughter. He enclosed an open billet to that young lady containing an offer of his heart and hand, and impatiently awaited an answer. When the letter, the most momentous he had ever written, was despatched, and beyond the power of recall, he almost wondered at his own temerity in sending it. The more he reflected on the uniform coldness with which his attentions had been received by Miss O'Neill, the less hope remained to him of their being now more fa-

vourably accepted; and, as he walked up and down his chamber in a state of agitation never previously experienced, he felt that, little as he had dared to hope, the total demolition of these faint hopes required the exertion of all his strength of mind to support. "I have been rash in thus bringing the affair to a crisis," thought Vernon.

"Time and patience might have wrought something in my favour. Yet, no; what grounds had I for hope, and is it not better to know the worst at once? Had I courage it would have been well to have made my proposal in person. I should then have had an opportunity of judging whether I was rejected from indifference, or because another and more fortunate man had made an impression on her heart. But I will, even though rejected, ask permission to be received as an acquaintance, as a friend; and opportunities may thus offer of ascertaining the state of her feelings. Yes, beautiful Grace, though I have not been able to win your affection, I will try, at least, to merit your esteem; and, if *I* cannot render you happy myself, it will be some consolation to enable another to do so."

In due time, the servant who was the bearer of Vernon's letter returned. How quickly throbbed the heart of his master as he heard his step ascending the stairs and saw him enter the room! It was a relief to him to hear that "an answer would be sent;" it seemed a reprieve for which he was thankful. Vernon could settle to nothing from the moment he received this message. Various conflicting thoughts passed through his mind. Hope revived in his breast once more as the thought suggested itself that, had Miss O'Neill positively decided on rejecting him, no time would have been lost in sending an answer to his letter. He walked up and down his room; opened his window to see if any one was bringing a letter to the barracks; took up a newspaper and tried to read, but in a few minutes threw it down again; opened book after book, in the hope of being able to occupy himself, but every attempt was vain.

Never did time hang so heavily on his hands, and, when every half hour he referred to his watch, he could scarcely believe that four hours had not elapsed when only one had gone by. At length, a letter was brought

to him, and he desired his servant to leave it on the table, being unwilling that he should see his emotion. When the servant had left the room Vernon, with trembling hands, tore open the envelope, and found that it contained only one letter. That was from the Countess O'Neill, who stated that her grand-daughter had requested her to answer the letter addressed to her by Mr. Vernon. In terms the most courteous the proposal was declined, though with a due sense of the honour conferred on Miss O'Neill, and with every kind wish for the future happiness of Mr. Vernon, whom the Countess stated it would always give them pleasure to receive as a friend, but with an explicit understanding that the proposal which he had done Miss O'Neill the honour to make should be no more referred to.

"Cold, unfeeling girl, not to have written me a single line!" exclaimed Vernon, as he threw the letter from him. "A love like mine merited at least a few expressions of kindness from her own hand. But perhaps it is better as it is. A note from her would be something to treasure, something to keep alive a hopeless passion, and I need, Hea-

ven knows, nought to do that. Grace, Grace, you have cast from you a heart that loved, idolized you, and with a passion so true, so unselfish that even now, when hope is fled for ever, it can dictate the prayer springing from its inmost core, that you may never have cause to repent this rejection,—that in him you love you may find all the devotion for you that fills mine!"

A sentiment of delicacy prevented Mordant seeking his friend that day. He wished to spare his feelings by not witnessing the emotions of regret, which a refusal of his suit would inflict on Vernon; and he had not philosophy enough to behold unmoved the happiness which its acceptation must bestow. "Herbert Vernon," thought he, "is not a man likely to be denied the hand of any girl: so good-looking, gentlemanlike, and high-principled as he is. I know no man more likely to render a woman happy. In England he might, I am sure, select, with a certainty of success, any girl from the proudest house to become his bride. With a mind and person so attractive, with a character so respected and esteemed, and with prospects so brilliant, how few could re-

ject him! Miss O'Neill may have hitherto given no attention to his assiduities, because she did not believe that he was seriously attached to her, but, his devotion proved by the most irrefragable of all proofs—an offer of marriage—she may now accept his hand."

A pang shot through his heart as he contemplated this possibility, and, after yielding for a few minutes to the pain he endured, he endeavoured to reason himself out of his regret. "I must not be selfish," thought he. "With the conviction that nowhere could this matchless creature bestow her hand where the blessing would be more highly prized than by Vernon, nor where her happiness could be more safely trusted, I must not allow my own disappointment to engross my thoughts. Situated as I unfortunately am, I could not ask her to share my lot, and, as she could not be mine, I ought to rejoice that the man I most esteem will call her his. Happy Vernon! you will, indeed, possess a treasure, but you are worthy of her. Even my tortured heart, while writhing under the pangs of hopeless love, is ready to acknowledge that you are so. Perhaps, had I not discontinued my attentions, I might have

created an interest in her heart. There were moments during our first acquaintance that I thought I was not *wholly* indifferent to her. Oh! those were delicious, intoxicating moments—never, never to be forgotten! Had I loved her less—if *her* happiness had not been far dearer to me than my own—I could not have had the courage to avoid her presence, and desist from betraying to her the passion she had inspired. Beautiful Grace! you will never know how wildly, how devotedly, you were loved! If you ever bestow a thought on me, you will think me strange, wayward, and incomprehensible. But better is it that you should thus judge me than know hereafter that I was selfish enough to involve you in the misery of poverty, which must have been the case had I won your hand."

While these reflections were passing through the mind of Mordant, his cogitations were disturbed by a visit, as unexpected as it was undesired, from Mr. Hunter. One of the evils of residing in a barrack is, that solitude, unless he who wishes for it is made of sterner stuff than was Mordant, is almost out of the question. Hence it often occurs that,

when an officer wishes most to be alone, one of his comrades will lounge into his room, to bestow his tediousness on him, and will frequently be so indiscreet as not to perceive that his presence is unwelcome.

"You look as bored as I am, Mordant," observed Hunter, throwing himself on a sofa. "But I don't wonder at it; this is such a devilish dull place that one never knows how to kill time."

"Have you made many attempts?"

"Innumerable. I have set all the idle boys about the streets boxing; and was rather amused by it at first, but I have got tired of it. I have set them to run races in the exercise-ground until they have been ready to drop, and sent them home happy in the possession of more coppers than they ever had before. Five shillings' worth of halfpence goes a great way in distributing rewards among these half-naked urchins, who consider me nothing less than a Crœsus in wealth, and a prince in generosity, because I have expended some two or three pounds' worth of halfpence in encouraging their gymnastic sports."

"That accounts for the crowd of ragged

boys, with elfin looks, that I saw yesterday coming out of the whisky-shop intoxicated—or, as one of them termed it, 'screeching drunk,'—vociferating blessings on 'the crathur,' and 'the soldier-officer,' who furnished the means of procuring it. You will do mischief, Hunter, in enabling those poor boys to get drunk."

"But they are such good fun when the whisky works in them. See them before they have drunk any, and they are inanimate, timid, and pale, looking the pictures of starvation and misery; but no sooner have they tossed off a glass of this fiery liquid than they become wild, reckless, and full of gaiety, and utter such original things, bring forth such droll images and comical similes, as are enough to make one half die of laughing."

"You should, however, remember, Hunter, that what is sport to you is death to these poor creatures."

"If one is to be always thinking of the probable results of the money one throws away, few would bestow charity."

"Charity! my good fellow; surely, you cannot consider providing the means of buying whisky as charity?"

"By Jove I do, though; for, if I make a set of poor starving wretches forget for a few hours the pangs of hunger and cold, I think I have done a charitable action."

"Far, far from it. You have encouraged in them a propensity which, once acquired, is seldom conquered—a propensity that has, unhappily, greatly retarded the civilization and improvement of their unfortunate country."

"What a grave affair you make of a trifle, Mordant! Don't continue the lecture, there's a good fellow; for no schoolboy ever more dreaded being flogged than I do being lectured. What a place this is for falling in love! In fact, a poor devil has nothing else to do. Being in love gives one something to think of."

"Am I to conclude that you have had recourse to this *dernier resource* for passing your time?"

"Well, and if I have, I might do worse."

"That depends on the object you have selected."

"Selected! What a strange fellow you are, Mordant! Just as if a man selects the girl he is to fall in love with. According to

my notion there is no choice in the affair. A man falls in love because he has nothing else to do, and because he can't help it. If a man had the choice whether he would be in love or not, it's my belief few would prefer it."

"Then, according to your notion, reason is for nothing in this the most momentous affair of a man's whole life, and on which all his happiness is to depend."

"Why, what can all the reason in the world do for him if a girl takes his fancy, and he finds he can't do without her?"

"Exercise his reason. Try absence, in general a very efficacious remedy for the love of gentlemen under twenty-five years of age, and a remedy the excellence of which you have proved on more than one occasion."

"If a man were to do that every time he falls in love, he'd never marry at all."

"And it would be better never to marry than to wed a girl to whom a man's attachment was so slight that a few months' absence could conquer it."

"But, as a fellow who is to have lots of money must marry one day or another, he may as well do it when the fancy comes into his head."

"And, when it is too late, repent it all his days."

"That he may do, when or whoever he marries; and, if a fellow ever has a good excuse for getting married, it is in country quarters, where there is not even a billiard-table, or smoking-room, or a news-room, to help him to kill time; but where there are some devilish pretty girls ready to take him for better or worse."

"If such are your feelings, you are in danger, my good fellow, and I earnestly advise you to ask for leave of absence and go to England, rather than rush headlong into wedlock."

"I have always thought of marriage as of a desperate leap out hunting—neck or nothing; and, whenever I do marry, it will be in the same spirit."

"No great compliment to the future Mrs. James Hunter."

"I'll never make *you* my confidant, Mordant, I can tell you, for you have no more feeling about love-affairs than my grandmother. If you had, you could not have resisted such a bevy of beauties as this place contains. Why, by Jove! there are girls

here that would put to shame the cried-up belles in London, with their faces faded by hot rooms and late hours, and their manners as languid as their faces; while the girls here are fresh and blooming as roses, and full of spirits and gaiety. But you have no heart, Mordant, that's the fact.

A deep and uncontrollable sigh might have revealed to a keener observer how erroneous was Mr. Hunter's supposition; but the latter, drawing out a cigar, prepared to light it, fully convinced that his friend was a cold-hearted opponent to love and wedlock.

"Hunter, you must not infect my room with tobacco-smoke," said Mordant, removing the light which Hunter was applying to the cigar,—a hint which drove away the unwelcome intruder, whistling as he went for want of thought.

END OF VOL. I.

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